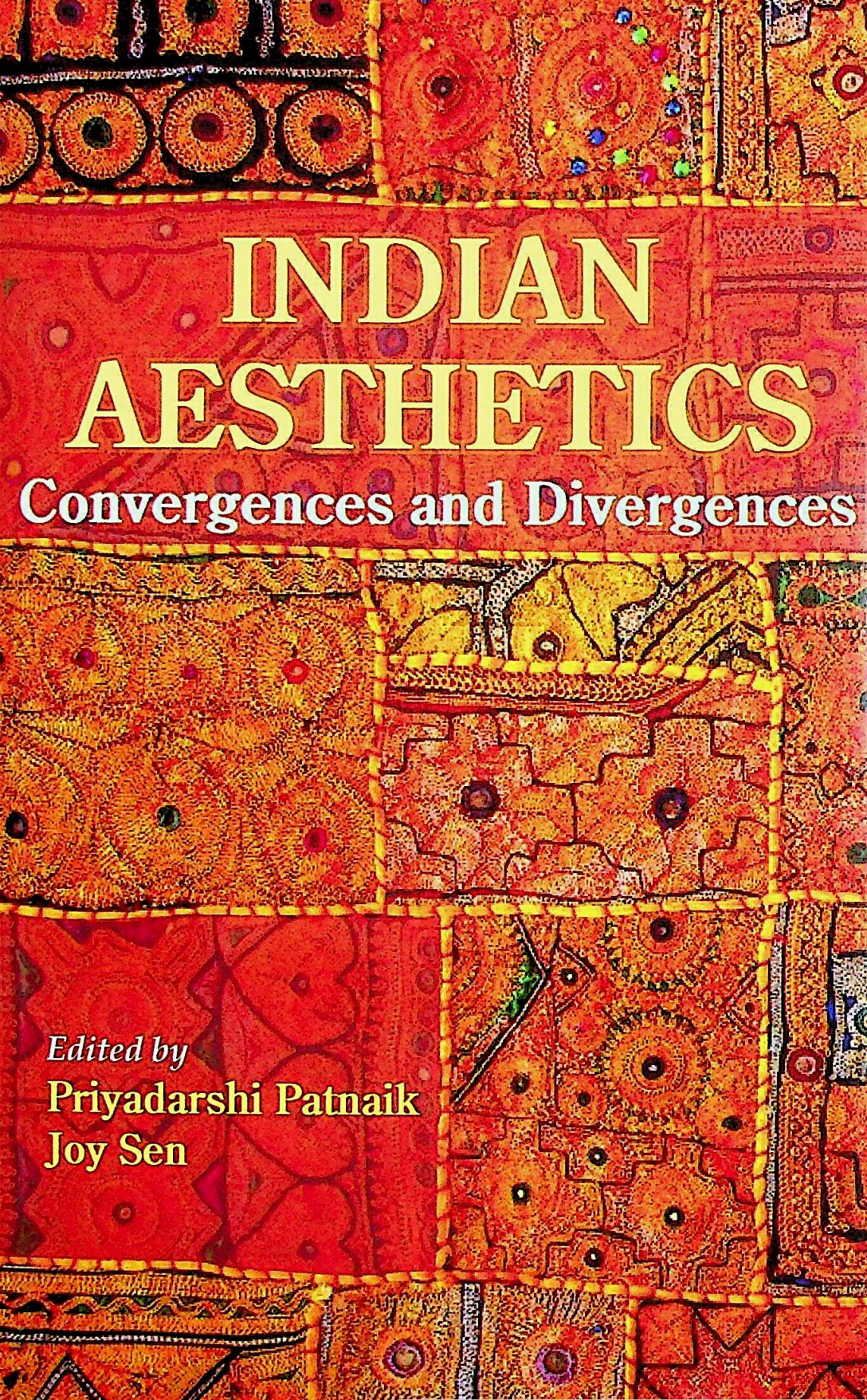
INDIAN
AESTHETICS
Convergences and Divergences
Edited by
Priyadarshi Patnaik
Joy Sen

A collection of fifteen scholarly articles, this volume focuses on the convergences and divergences which exist in Indian aesthetics, focusing both on Theoretical Explorations and their Applications. Indian aesthetics encompasses traditions and texts that focus on literary, visual, structural and performative productions of a wide range of art forms that delight, entertain, provoke their audience in ways that are relevant to the life. These art forms result in various responses such as delight, emotional relish, and enjoyment. In their convergence with other arts, different Indian art forms, be it cinema, dance, drama, music, literature or sculpture, have practised a "give and take" policy all through their history. Most of them are based on the *rasa* theory as the connecting thread. Talking about the divergences, the book details how different art forms emerged from a common root and shaped up as separate entities within the Indian framework, while embedding divergent viewpoints opening up the possibility of diverse views on the same concept. These developments also hold true for modern art forms like cinema. The volume provides illustrations taken from a wide range of art forms ancient and contemporary, talking about the diverse applications of Indian aesthetics across multiple art forms in recent times.

Indian Aesthetics

Indian Aesthetics
Convergences and Divergences

Edited by
PRIYADARSHI PATNAIK
JOY SEN

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To our Mothers
For we saw the reflection of all Mothers in them ...!

Preface

Time tests the merit of a work. That on revisiting the papers after a few years one finds them as relevant as they were when just written speaks of the relatively lasting significance of these works that deal with diverse issues of Indian aesthetics. The relevance of the papers presented here has two implications. One, they are by many of our leading as well as young and upcoming scholars of aesthetics. Second, they are in areas where interest and relevance are sustained through ages. Beauty and what makes a thing beautiful have intrigued humankind since ages. While through advances in cognitive science, some of the answers are slowly coming, they are still far too incomplete and there are still many questions that remain unanswered. The book addresses some of them from diverse approaches and orientations. Thus, literary art, music, visual arts, film, and performance, all come under its purview, both in terms of ancient theorizations, modern reinterpretations as well as application of such theories to modern and contemporary arts – both Indian and Western.

Unfortunately, as the book sees the light of the day, we and many of its authors miss the presence of three of its key contributors who are no more with us – Professor Ananta Charan Sukla, Professor Navjyoti Singh and Professor Ranjan Ghosh, three stalwarts of Indian aesthetics and philosophy whom the academic community misses deeply.

We offer our prayers for the departed souls. We would also like to take this occasion to thank all the contributors for continued goodwill and support for necessary changes and edits as required for the publication of the volume.

We would also like to thank Indian Council of Philosophical Research, where some of the ideas for the book and its themes emerged. Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to Mr. Susheel Kumar Mittal of D.K. Printworld for his meticulous endeavour and support in making this book possible.

July 2021 **Priyadarshi** and **Joy**

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Introduction

I

This collection of essays is about "convergences" and "divergences" in Indian aesthetics. What does this exactly mean? Why is such an exploration relevant? We will briefly examine these questions before presenting an overview of the essays in this volume. The term "aesthetics", itself becomes problematic in the Indian context since it is borrowed from the West, has its own connotations and is then applied to a culture with a distinctive mind of its own about theories of beauty. Thus, in speaking in the English language, for a multicultural audience (European, English-educated Indians and those trained in Indian "aesthetics") the problem multiplies since while the words are the same, meanings imputed and perspectives adopted are very different. However, there is also a strong common urge to attempt to "transcend" boundaries, to search for similarities, as well as a great desire to identify one's distinctive difference from others, so that one is not dissolved in someone else's cultural identity — a fear that comes to Indian scholars easily. Indian aesthetics, as we understand it in this volume, encompasses traditions and texts in India (here, especially Sanskrit), that focus on examining literarily, visual, structural and performative productions/products that delight, entertain, provoke in ways that are not entirely (or only) intellectual. Thus, we may use terms such as "delight", "emotional relish", "enjoyment" as end results of our exploration of these forms. Any text that addresses such products/processes in terms of how they operate, what are their components, the processes involved, the experience born thereof, the whys and hows, we consider as a

part of Indian aesthetics. History of such texts, and their focus of aesthetic products/processes, as some of our essays will elaborate, are in fact much older in our tradition that in the West. But then the rediscovery of such texts, renewed interest in them, and the desire to re-establish them, is a more post-colonial exercise encompassed by a scholarship which is more aware, more trained and equipped with Western methods and traditions. However, this, when properly used, is more a strength than weakness.

"Convergences", in our case, imply points of commonality, possibility for meaningful interaction, the hope of assimilation, and healthy respect for differences in spite of apparent similarities. That is the reason for not using "similarities" since it can lead to vague generalizations without due understanding and respect for historical processes and cultural differences. "Divergences" is another keyword of significance since it looks at the discourse about art products/processes in two ways: (a) how they emerge from a common root and even historically, within the Indian framework, are applied to other (and sometimes apparently not-compatible) contexts, and (b) how divergent opinions are embedded within the framework, thus opening up the possibility of diverse view about the same concepts — for example the *rasa* theory, which by the eleventh century CE, when Abhinavagupta discussed it, had already embedded at least three different viewpoints about it. In such a tradition, debates are welcome and productive.

II

The compilation of essays here holds true to the points made above providing for both the possibilities of convergences while showing how theories are applied in diverse contexts, and debating about differences and their implications. The essays are also arranged in two different categories: (a) essays that deal with theories in the Indian context, and (b) essays that apply diverse constructs of Indian aesthetics to a wide range of art forms in different ways.

The introductory essay by Ananta Charan Sukla, "Indian

Aesthetics: Divergence and Convergence Possibilities, Scope and Limits", directly addresses issues related to defining Indian aesthetics, by providing a Western context to the debate, delineating finer distinctions between aesthetics, philosophy, as well as Western and Indian approaches. He also cautions about the overenthusiastic Indian scholars hurriedly pointing to surface resemblances without looking at the deeper divergences between Indian and Western traditions. On the other hand, P.K. Mukhopadhyay's essay, "Art and Aesthetics: A Few Philosophical Reflections", takes up a different contextual canvas, focusing on why aesthetics occupies only a marginal place in mainstream philosophy. Addressing issues like the "language" of literary art and marginality of aesthetics, he probes into fundamental questions such as the very nature of "aesthetics" as a form of knowledge, its relation to its object of study, the resistance of art to philosophical treatment. It attempts to make a case of Indian aesthetics as an independent form of knowledge without fitting it to the other traditions of knowledge in the Indian context.

"Literary Theories in Sanskrit: Basic Concepts and Interrelations", by Radhavallabh Tripathi represents a different approach, a more involved one, where he delves directly into five key concepts of Indian aesthetic tradition — *chandas* (literature, rhythmic structure), *śilpa* (art), *anukṛti* (creative manifestation), *rasa* (aesthetic emotion) and *alaṁkāra* (embellishment/sufficiency/fit in words) — and tries to show the seminal relevance of each as well as the relationship among one another. Ranjan K. Ghosh's essay, "Indian Aesthetics and Art: A Conceptual View", takes a different stand by addressing the re-articulation of Indian aesthetics by key modern thinkers such as Coomaraswamy, Sri Aurobindo and K.C. Bhattacharyya. He delineates the distinctive traits of Indian aesthetics and then focuses his attention on the way such thoughts shape Tagore both as an artist as well as an aesthetician. In contrast to these, the next essay by Bharat Gupt, "Indian Music: An Introduction", devotes itself to a quick but extremely perceptive

study of the history of Indian musical tradition, identifying key features, key traditions, continuity as well as change. He ends his essay by focusing on how Indian classical music has adopted to change again and again, especially in the modern context. Dr Subhas Phogat's "Origin of Rasa: A Philosophical Appraisal", re-examines one of the most popular concepts in Indian aesthetics, that of *rasa*. While briefly outlining its tradition of continuity since Bharata, it specifically addresses the issues of certain *rasa*s emerging out of other *rasa*s, and then on the concept of one fundamental primal *rasa* — *mahārasa* — in the writings of Dhanañjaya, Dhanika, Bhoja and Abhinavagupta. The last essay of Part 1 that focuses on theory is "Ontological Analysis of Nāṭya", by Sonal Nimbkar and Navjyoti Singh. Crisply and pithily, it addresses the key elements of dramatic performance and the key roles they play; on the nature of aesthetic emotions and the logic of their perception, and ends by focusing on the significance of the performative tradition (*anukṛti*) which is much more than mere imitation.

The essays in the Second Part of this volume, on application of Indian aesthetics, cover a wide range of art forms from literary art, visual art and performance to film and ecological aesthetics.

The first essay in this Part by Deb Kamal Ganguly, "The Indian New Wave Cinema", focuses on how the new wave, especially in the works of Mani Kaul and Kamal Swaroop, while borrowing heavily from the Western tradition, is also permeated by Indian sensibilities. The next short essay by Joydeep Dutta "Idealism in Indian Aesthetics" looks at three key figures of Indian aesthetics, Sri Aurobindo, K.C. Bhattacharyya and Tagore, and focuses on how they delineate the tradition in terms of experimentiality and transcendence. The next essay "From Seventh Art to Post-Aesthetics: Bollywood and the Demise of the Aesthetics of the Auteur", by Anindya S. Purakayastha, again delves into applying of Western and Indian aesthetics, this time to mainstream Bollywood films. Debating on the issues of aesthetics and anti-aesthetics in the post-modern context, the essay looks at the cultural influence

of *Nāṭyaśastra*; but manages to present that Bollywood aesthetics draws from a huge gamut of influence not much of which can be traced to the Indian aesthetic tradition. The next essay by P.G. Rama Rao, "The Shelleyan Aesthetics: An Indian Perspective", takes us back to the Romantic era and to a very different poetic context. With caution and circumspection, the essay presents a case of many of Shelleyan ideas having distinctive resemblance to Indian aesthetic concepts, especially *rasa* aesthetics during the process of artistic creativity. The next essay by Arunendu Banerjee, "Futuristic Humane Habitation Culture and Rabindranath Tagore", takes us to a very different world of applied aesthetics — that of built habitat at Santiniketan. How the ecological ideologies and harmonious built habitat (*āśrama*) get assimilated in the experimentation by Tagore at Santiniketan is well documented and presented here as a pointer to the current focus on green habitats. Joy Sen's essay also focuses on a related figure, Abanindranath Thakur, but from the perspective of visual art. It is a rich documentation of the way Thakur's vision assimilated the West, but was strongly rooted in the Indian art and aesthetic tradition, and that too consciously. The next essay by Priyadarshi Patnaik, "Multimodality, Translation and Transformation in Rāgamālā Paintings", takes a different approach by applying Western semiotics to Indian art form on the basis of compatible components that are common to both. The final essay, "From Imitation to Ingenuity: Bengali Theatre from 1795–1857", by Ujjwal Jana, is a historically pertinent essay on the performance tradition of Bengal where he points to the strong Western influence and hangover that results in new theatre of Bengal not being able to accept the rich Indian tradition for over more than half a decade.

Each volume on Indian aesthetics is a product of its own historical context. While we cannot vouch for the lasting value of this small collection, we hope that it will be insightful for the reader in pointing to the key areas of debate as well as diverse application of Indian aesthetics in the last one decade.

Priyadarshi Patnaik and Joy Sen
Editors

Part I
Theoretical Explorations

1

Indian Aesthetics
Divergence and Convergence Possibilities, Scope and Limits

Ananta Charan Sukla

Writings that refer to the area of knowledge called Indian aesthetics cover Sanskrit poetics and Sanskrit treatises on architecture, sculpture, music, dance and drama. The writers of these treatises drew upon other disciplines of the ancient Vedic and non-Vedic Sanskrit texts such as the *mantra*s of the Vedic hymns, Upaniṣads, philosophy of language as propounded by the grammarians and exegets, and the metaphysics of the Sāṁkhya, Yoga and Vedānta schools. But the writers of these treatises did not count them under a single conceptual banner that could refer to "aesthetics" as it is conceived of in the current English vocabulary. The term aesthetics was coined by the German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten deriving it from the Greek *aesthesis* meaning sense perception literally. In 1735 Baumgarten defined the term aesthetics as the science of how things are to be cognized by means of senses, exemplified later in 1750 as the theory of the liberal arts, the logic of the lower faculty of cognition, the act of the analogue of reason — a study of and pleasure in the exercise of sensibility for its own sake, as manifested in the production of works of artistic beauty.

Thus, originally, the term aesthetics did not connote any conceptual issue in the production and application of the works of artistic beauty. Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* in its extant portion, deals with both the theoretical and practical issues in the study of

artworks such as heuristics, methodology and semiotics that provide a different sort of knowledge of human experience afforded only by the arts, not by science. In this sense aesthetics is an independent area of knowledge legitimatized by the sensory values of artworks. But later on the Hegelian philosophers betrayed the original proposal of Baumgarten, and in their conceptualization of the whole issue, they simply ignored the possibility of any claim to aesthetic cultivation in the Oriental culture. If aesthetics is philosophy, and philosophy is a cognitive science, then, they observed, Oriental cultures have never cultivated aesthetics, because philosophy as a cognitive science has never been cultivated there. As early as 1892 the British Hegelian philosopher Bernard Bosanquet even refused to acknowledge the existence of any aesthetic consciousness in Oriental culture:

> Many readers may complain of the almost total absence of direct reference to Oriental art, whether in the ancient world or in modern China and Japan. For this omission there were several connected reasons. I was hardly called upon . . . to deal with an aesthetic consciousness which had not, to my knowledge, reached the point of being clarified into speculative theory. — 1892: X

W.T. Stace heightens the rigour of Bosanquet:

> There were great civilizations in Egypt, China, Assyria, and so on. They produced art and religion, but no philosophy to speak of. The case of India is more doubtful. Opinions may differ as to whether India ever had any philosophy. The reasons why this Indian thought is not usually included in histories of philosophy are as follows: First, philosophy in India has never separated itself from religious and practical needs. The ideal of knowledge for its own sake is rarely to be found . . . . — 1920: 13-14

The Hegelian idea of philosophy as knowledge for its own sake (or "pure thought") has been countered long since, and the *Cambridge History of Indian Philosophy* in five volumes by Surendranath Dasgupta (1922ff.) has rebutted Stace a century ago — just two years after the statement quoted above.

I

In the Western tradition aesthetics has been treated as philosophy of art or artistic beauty. In 1914, E.F. Carritt treated aesthetics as the theory of beauty while dealing with the ideas of the ancients and moderns — Plato, Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, George Hegel, Arthur Schopenhauer, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Ruskin, Leo Tolstoy, Friedrich Nietzsche and Benedett Croce — categorizing them severally such as realistic — typical, intellectualist, expressionist and formal. Carritt understood beauty as a quality of an object subject to man's experience, and while disapproving of Hegel's superficial treatment of *natural* beauty he observed:

> Artistic and natural beauty are thoroughly homogeneous. Every man is an artist not only in that he conveys his impressions to others by language, but because he perceives the beauty of the world and of art, each of which he must create or recreate for himself, since neither speaks to the animal. The *work* of art is the communication . . . the man we call an artist and the ordinary admirer of nature differ only in degree. Both perceive or create for themselves beauty; the artist owing mainly to a more vivid and absorbing perception, has the desire and the power to communicate what he has perceived. — pp. 26-27

The value of beauty, both natural and artistic, is non-utilitarian in its evoking pleasure in the audience without impairing his sense of truth and goodness. One may not agree with the Keatsean dictum that beauty and truth are identical, but beauty certainly does not distort truth, nor does it ignore goodness. Aesthetics as philosophy of art or theory of beauty thus appears to be as old as the history of Western civilization originating in the pre-Socratic Greek culture and growing luxuriantly through the centuries to follow till the present day. Keeping aside its colourful and immense growth considered in the light of Carritt's fundamental ideas, aesthetics does not seem to be quite alien to the Indian tradition. In Sanskrit there are terms such as *saundarya*, *cārutya* and *ramaṇīyatā* defined both objectively and subjectively. According to the epic poet Māgha

(ninth century CE) beauty is a formal quality that causes an object appear anew every moment *(kṣaṇe kṣaṇe yannavatamupaitti tadeva rūpam ramaṇīyatayā*, IV.17). But the Kashmirian philosopher Bhaṭṭa Tauta, a contemporary of Māgha, observes that there is a specific aspect of human intelligence that cognizes the same object as unfolded anew every moment. This aspect is called *pratibhā* and Jagannātha (seventeenth century CE), correlating both Māgha and Tauta holds: beauty is that which causes cognition of an extraordinary pleasure (the *rasa* experience). On the other hand, Vāmana (eighth century CE) interprets *saundarya* as embellished language *(alaṁkāra)*, which, according to him, is poetry. These Sanskrit writers, as it appears, do not enunciate any philosophy or systematic doctrine of beauty, nor do they correlate their ideas of beauty with a philosophy of art in general. The views mentioned above refer to theory of poetry or verbal art rather than art in general. Avoiding any controversy in this regard Ananda Coomaraswamy speaks of an Indian/Oriental "philosophy of art" not aesthetics as early as the fourth decade of the last century preceded by the Western scholars like Sylvain Lévi and A.B. Keith who studied Indian dramatic literature vis-à-vis the Greek tradition.

Following Coomaraswamy a galaxy of scholars including Kanti Chandra Pandey and Pravas Jivan Chaudhuri put much of their energy in exploring the possible homogeneous aspects of both the Western and Indian philosophical thoughts on art during the second half of the last century. The area fascinated the Western scholars so much that the 1965 Fall issue of the American *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* published a special volume on this area under the leadership of Thomas Munro and Archie Bahm. The supplement to this volume contained nine essays by Chaudhuri on the issue of "aesthetic attitude" in Indian philosophy of art which was anticipated by Edward Bullough in 1912. These explorations were attractive enough to impress an American neo-Kantian, a committed disciple of Ernst Cassirer, Susanne Langer in observing that "some of the Hindu critics ... understand much better than

their Western colleagues the various aspects of emotion in the theatre which our writers so freely and briefly confuse" (1953: 323). Scholars including the present author, the founder editor of the *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics* (1978) have been contributing to this field with great enthusiasm and commitment (Hussain and Wilkinson 2006: 27ff.).

II

But, against the backdrop of this proliferating literature on Sanskrit writings what is often forgotten is the marked truth that the native scholars frequently ignore the fundamental differences between the two traditions — Indian and Western. In their overenthusiasm for converging the two traditions they ignore the fact that the native practices reveal the taste of a people in their cultural context. Interpretation of a critical concept must, therefore, be founded primarily on this particular context, the universality of this particular context being secondary. The defensive attitude of the Indian scholars has been obviously due to the cultural domination by the European colonizers. The intellectual rivalry of the Indian scholars provoked by this Eurocentrism of the colonial administrators is responsible for their arduous efforts in converging some of the critical concepts of the Sanskrit tradition with their Western counterparts rather hastily. This hasty juxtaposition led naturally to erroneous judgements. A few examples will clarify these observations that have been made elsewhere (Sukla 2003).

Aesthetic Attitude and Psychical Distance: Edward Bullough and Chaudhuri

Chaudhuri's argument that Bullough's notion of aesthetic attitude as a psychological act/process of distancing is anticipated by the classical Sanskrit writers on dramaturgy. But Bullough formulates his doctrine of aesthetic attitude following Kant's idea of "disinterestedness" in experiencing the beauty of art and nature. But, as we have already seen, the Sanskrit critics, led by Abhinavagupta, have never counted the experience of different

kinds of art under a single modifier aesthetic. The kind of attitude (*abhisandhi*) a theatrical audience holds is of this sort — "today I am going to enjoy sights and sound of a non-ordinary nature, a representational action/performance of actors and actresses accompanied by music and visual sets and so on". This is certainly not the attitude of an audience of other sorts of art works. This attitude, again, is not at all a "psychical distance" because Abhinavagupta emphatically mentions that the experience of a theatrical audience, otherwise called *rasa* experience, is not at all indifference or detachment comparable with a man on the seashore watching somebody drowning in the sea (*na taṭasthyena*). The audience rather participates in the performance than maintaining a distance (*svātmānupraveśa*). This enjoyment consists in the tasting of one's own consciousness:

> This tasting is endowed with extreme pleasantness, which it obtains from a contact with the various latent traces of pleasure, pain, etc. It differs both from ordinary perception, which is full of obstacles and from the perception of the *yogins*, which is not free from harshness on account of the total lack of any tasting of external objects. — Sukla 2003: 152

Extension of Rasa Experience to Aesthetic Pleasure

For the Sanskrit theorists, *rasa* experience is due only to the experience of the theatre and poetry. Its extension to the experience of all the varities of art works such as sculpture, music and dance under a single modifier aesthetic is erroneous. In converging the West with the *rasa* theory the scholars fancifully interpret *sthāyibhāva* as an archetypal emotion ignoring the fundamental idea that according to Patañjali, followed by Abhinavagupta, emotion is a function of consciousness (*citta-vṛtti*) whereas an archetype, according to Karl Jung, is a phenomenon of collective unconscious (Rosa Gomez in Antoon Braembussche 2009). Similarly, the *dhvani* theory, strictly a linguistic phenomenon, cannot be applied to the study of the non-verbal arts.

In reciprocal convergence of the non-Indian philosophy with the Indian tradition scholars must be extremely careful in judging the unique features of each tradition that cannot be converged into one another. Any superficial dealing will damage the foundation of the tradition concerned. Intellectual enthusiasm is always appreciated whereas over-enthusiasm ends in fanaticism.

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2

Art and Aesthetics
A Few Philosophical Reflections[1]

P.K. Mukhopadhyay

Some may feel uneasy about the very title of the paper for it has been remarked by some scholars that in India aesthetics (Alaṁkāraśāstra) developed independently of particular philosophical positions. Even if this is true, philosophical reflections on art and aesthetics are neither impossible nor irrelevant. Also, the word philosophy as used here need not be understood too narrowly. A part, and only a part, of what we mean here by philosophical reflections is that the reflections we intend to record here are largely general and theoretical in nature.

That we propose to speak here on a number of general issues is not entirely a matter of free choice; for we could scarcely do anything more as we do not have necessary training, let alone expertise, in Alaṁkāraśāstra or aesthetics and all it is about. This statement is more than just a statement of fact; it is problematic or gestures towards something that is so. For one would feel like asking why the situation is as stated or why it should be like this. Looking back we find that in our long academic career we authored only four articles in the field of art and aesthetics, one each in the field of Vaiṣṇava art and Vaiṣṇava aesthetics and the third was in

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[1] This is partly based on the presentation made in the seminar on Aesthetics organized by Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Kharagpur, West Bengal, during 26-28 February 2010.

defence of aesthetic motivation in science. The fourth one is about the possible application of the famous doctrine of *apoha* of Buddhist philosophy in theorizing on art and beauty. When we think about this we first become explicitly conscious that this case of mine is not a solitary exception. Track record of majority of our academic friends and colleagues is no better. This indicates, what is, as a matter of fact, true — that aesthetics occupies only a marginal place in mainstream philosophy.[2] This is somewhat parallel to the marginal position which art occupies in our life and education in general. And this is notwithstanding the fact that, as it has been said, "just as there seem to be no human communities anywhere without language, so also might art serve as the criterion of the human".[3] We have become so used to this situation that it tends to slip out of our explicit awareness. The present seminar (as well as seminar publication) affords us, among other things, an opportunity to reverse this situation or, and even before that, to try to understand it. If we could bring to our explicit awareness the marginal position of aesthetics then perhaps serious and systematic attempt could begin to understand why it is so. Eventually we might succeed in bringing aesthetics back to its rightful place in mainstream philosophy and art in our education system and normal life. In the process philosophy will be more enriched and aesthetics will develop further and faster. Till now aesthetics is at most a part of the syllabus of literature or performing arts. But aesthetics seems to be too important to be left exclusively in the hands of teachers of art and literature. However, our aim is limited; we want more

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[2] It is somewhat besides the point that the term aesthetics was coined only in the eighteenth century in Europe or that ancient Greece did not have art in the modern sense of the term. It is also not denied that the word art is used in different senses; sometimes it is contrasted with life, sometimes with science, sometimes with nature and so on. We will assume that these are all matters of common knowledge now.

[3] Reuben Abel, 1976, *Man Is the Measure*, New York: The Free Press, p. 264.

to understand the situation than to suggest any concrete measure to change it.

The second point that we notice, when we take stock of writings of our colleagues on aesthetics, is that literary art form dominates over other art forms. Discussions in *Dhvanyāloka* and many other works on aesthetics, particularly the examples cited to illustrate important aesthetic points, principles or theses there tend to confirm this impression. However, one can hardly fail to note that regular system of formal training in this art form is highly uncommon. In formal institutions of learning of art including departments of pure and performing arts literature is not a regular or principal subject. One may ask for some explanation of this fact. We do not think that we have any convincing or learned explanation to offer nor do we intend to discuss whatever explanation we might give. It suffices to simply suggest that somehow the explanation has to do with one unique characteristic of this art form. The fourth chapter (*Uddyota*) of *Dhvanyāloka* seems to confirm at least partially this guess. The feature in question is that, unlike any other art form, literary art form essentially involves both language and meaning. Some think that this feature of it, union of language and meaning, *śabda* and *artha*, is the source or justification of why this art form is called *sāhitya* which we translate as literature or better literary art.

The language which art (unless mentioned otherwise art would mean here literary art) uses is moreover, largely speaking, common or ordinary language: it is the natural and historically given language of the people or culture concerned as distinct from the non-natural and constructed formal language of theoretical disciplines like logic and mathematics. The language of literary art is a matter of common possession of lay men, artistes as well as theoreticians. Nobody can do without this language. Any human creation in this language has the advantage of being more widely, almost universally, and easily accessible to all men even without any or much special training. So if art in general occupies only marginal place in our life it may not be due to its (linguistic) difficulty,

unfamiliarity or unintelligibility. Otherwise also there are reasons why it should have very much a central place in our daily life. A failure to appreciate art is believed to point at certain deficiency which does not go well with one's being a human individual (rather than an animal). There is a popular saying which brings this out rather sharply.[4]

The reason sometimes offered to explain the unusual conduct of ignoring art by the majority is that we cannot afford it. We cannot afford the time nor do we have the required peace of mind or leisure that creation and enjoyment of art demand or without which art cannot fulfil its promised entertainment. Life has become so very difficult nowadays. These people say that they are ready to admit that it is right on the part of a poet to say "What worth this life if full of care and we have no time to stand and stare!" Some may go further and say that the fact that life is so fast today and its complexities are so great, is all the more a reason why we must have recourse to art for quality living. It may be pointed out that modern age has evolved its own solution. This solution however appears to many as more harmful to art and it more offends than satisfies the lovers or connoisseurs of art. It is said that electronic multimedia has made even classical art more widely and easily accessible. But many think that whether in the field of music or dance or even painting and sculpture classical art is being marginalized. Just as theoreticians in the field of science and philosophy are expressing concern over deteriorating rationality so also in the field of art many people are expressing concern over the deterioration of taste for pure art. We do not go into this debate. We think that in one form or other art and theory of art still occupy only a marginal presence in their respective fields. Some other people argue that neglect of art does not prove lack of interest and importance of beauty in our life. Sometimes love for natural beauty expresses itself as neglect of art. One is reminded of what Gandhi is reported

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[4] *sāhitya saṁgīta kalā vihinaḥ sākṣāt paśu puccha viṣāṇahīnaḥ।*
tṛṇam khadannāpi jīvamanaḥ tadbhāgadheyam paramam paśunām॥

to have said on one occasion. The essence of what he said is that art affords us enjoyment of beauty. And since beauty of nature is already there one hardly needs art which can present us with only artificial beauty. This stand of Gandhi is worth comparing with the stand of the poet who wrote:

I strove with none for nobody was worth my strife
Nature I loved and next to nature art
I warmed my hands before the fire of life,
It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

This points towards a serious debate not only over the relation between art and nature but also over the role art, vis-à-vis, nature plays in our life.

I

We want to make next some general observations about the place of time and space in our thinking about art. Incidentally we are reminded of the fact that this seminar on aesthetics is organized following two other seminars — one each on space and time. It seems that compared to their contemporary European counterparts Indian aestheticians discuss far less the importance of various relations between art on the one hand and space and time on the other. Different art forms are directly related to space and time and can be distinguished in terms of how they are related to them or depict spatial or temporal relationships. Visual art like painting or sculpture involves geometrical spatial forms, shapes of different sizes. Parts of a painting or sculpture are spatial and are spatially related. So space is integral to the creation and understanding of visual art. But such art is relatively independent of time or somewhat lacks temporal dimension.[5]

This can be seen in another way also. The whole of a painting

[5] For more serious statements and detailed discussions, see J.O. Urmson, 1976, "The Performing Art" in *Contemporary British Philosophy*, ed. H. D. Lewis, London: George Allen & Unwin.

or sculpture may be presented in a single moment. There is no sequence involved. But music cannot be so presented. Music involves motion or temporally successive musical notes that are not *physically* given all at once. The same is true about dance. It is a problem with the philosophers how to make sense of a whole music or unity of music or musical performance. Part of the answer lies in distinguishing between the body of the particular art item which is constituted by temporal event (or spatial facts, as the case may be) and the grasping of the artistic significance, meaning, beauty or whatever which is instantaneous. Literary art may be had either in spoken language or in written language. In either case temporal sequencing is involved. It is known from long antiquity that the visual involves space; visual sensations apprehend things in space so much so space is regarded as a form of visual intuition whereas auditory sensation involves time. Anyway, one way of distinguishing among different genres of art is to refer to space and time. The related point is the criterion of unity of any single art creation, particularly where the whole creation takes time to complete. Time is also involved in writing a novel or even a poetry. But that is another matter. Even after the creator has finished his work, the accessing of it by the spectator or the audience also takes time. Besides, the case with performing art is still more complicated in that it is very difficult to decide who between the composer of music and the singer of it, or the choreographer and the dancer, is truly the creator? These are some of the questions which should immensely interest philosophy professionals not to speak of philosophers.

There is another dimension of the issue of the relation between art on the one hand and time and space on the other. It is called time transcendence in art. Three famous unities of classical aesthetics indicate that artistes needs must submit, while creating art, to the spatial and temporal unity or order. On the other hand artiste and art appreciator know that every successful art (the appeal and significance of it) transcends to some extent at least the spatial

and temporal limitation. In addition to this art is distinguished from reality with reference to time and space. Scientific and philosophical conception of *reality* involves reference to time and space. And though art is contrasted with reality it also makes reference to space and time. This complicates the matter all the more and should make philosophers interested in studying these dimensions of art.

II

Let us leave for the moment the question of place of art in life and education. Let us return to the question of marginalization of aesthetics. The sort of argument one can offer for according centrality or some position of dignity to art, even if the position is second to that of nature, does not seem to be available in case of aesthetics. If art is a matter of enjoyment and sensuous enjoyment at that then neither *kavi* nor *kavi-sahṛdaya*, including both connoisseurs and ordinary men, is likely to feel the need for aesthetics which is a learned discourse on the nature, creation and appreciation, etc. of art. Not only can we enjoy art without the benefit of such discourses so also sometimes the knowledge relating to art which aesthetics affords interferes with our natural ability to enjoy art. One may not deny necessarily that knowledge of possible defects (or such points of excellence) that might affect the aesthetic quality of a work of art can enable us (particularly the artiste) to avoid (ensure) defects (excellences) in question. However, the explicitly avowed need for art is the enjoyment of the *sahṛdaya*.[6] There is another use which we will talk about later.

The alleged indifference to aesthetics on the part of the artiste is similar to the acknowledged indifference of the working scientists towards philosophy of science. It may seem that some philosophers (of art) need aesthetics just as some other philosophers need

[6] Anandavardhana says in the very first verse of *Dhvanyāloka sahṛdayamanaḥprītaye*; later in the fourth chapter he speaks of other uses also.

philosophy of science. For it is the business of theoreticians like philosophers find and understand such general principles as are relevant. These theoreticians do not feel obliged to offer any justification for their pursuit. Knowledge is end in itself for them and free pursuit of it is their right. This at least is what the doctrine of autonomy or freedom of rational inquiry like science (and philosophy) entails. So even if aesthetics serves no ulterior purpose, it should be developed and pursued as a branch of pure theoretical knowledge. It would remain useful not as (directly and necessarily) contributing to creation or appreciation of art but as contributing to our understanding of the phenomenon of art, its definition, classification, etc. Why then philosophers seem so reluctant to give aesthetics a central position in mainstream philosophy? In a sense aesthetics was not there before nineteenth century in Europe though in India wide variety of Alaṁkāraśāstra and/ or Rasatattvśāstra reached almost its perfection by ninth and tenth century. Even so Alaṁkāraśāstra is not and has not been a branch of mainstream *darśana* in India. The easy explanation that philosophy is a matter of discursive knowledge whereas art is a matter of intuitive experience and emotive reaction is irrelevant and unenlightening. One possible answer which a philosopher is likely to offer is that aesthetics as philosophy of art is ill conceived besides being unduly narrow in its scope. For whereas art is primarily a matter of *created* beauty, certain human creation, aesthetics should be concerned with the beauty of nature as well. So an aesthete should admit that description of aesthetics as philosophy of art is a little restrictive and the restriction is uncalled for. There are reasons why in recent times, though not perhaps in classical period, philosophy is found to neglect natural beauty. I have discussed this reason in my paper "In Defence of Aesthetic Motivation in Science". Here I propose to discuss why philosophers marginalize aesthetics even when it is understood as philosophy of art?

Before I actually do that, a few more words of clarification

are necessary. The indifference or neglect in question becomes all the more enigmatic once we remember that in their personal life many philosophers (and scientists) have been great admirers of art; sometimes they are avid readers of literature and sometimes they are practitioners or creators of art. Many of them are great connoisseurs of art. (The converse is also true, though perhaps not that frequently; many practising artistes have taste for theory and are well read in aesthetics besides some other branches of knowledge.)[7] It appears that even when in their personal life and culture art occupied position of importance this is not visibly reflected in the professional career and life of many theoreticians like philosophers and scientists. Some rare exceptions are there. It is widely known that Hidegger's entire philosophy almost emanated from the works or views of the poet Holderlin. And at one stage Rabindranath was so much influenced by the work of the French philosopher Henri Bergson that he composed a whole lot of new poems which are markedly different in spirit and taste from those of his earlier and later poems. (A contrast between his poem "Sonartari" and "Sahajahan" or that between his two books of poems — *Bālaka* and *Purabī* brings this out clearly.)

According to some, the discipline of aesthetics is basically misconceived. And this could be the reason why philosophers in their professional life rather ignored aesthetics or treated it marginally. This answer is different from the other and more familiar answer that there is essential incompatibility between philosophy and art like poetry. This is believed to be rooted in the conflict (or only assumed conflict!) between imagination and intellect, truth and beauty, emotion and reason. It has been said imagination, art or poetry kills theory (*kāvyena hanyate śāstram*). But there are also bold assertion that within the unity of his personality or without disturbing that, a person indulges in soft emotion and austere intellect (*kavyeśu komalo dhiyo vayameva nānye*, etc.). The

[7] Albert Einstein, J.B.S. Haldane, Satyendera Nath Bose, Raja Ramanna, Isaiah Berlin, P.F. Strawson, etc. are cases in point.

actual and perhaps deeper reason is that science takes its birth in the belief and inspiration that nature is *perfect;* it is rationally perfect. To put it differently, it is perfectly ordered and it behaves according to fixed laws. There is no place here of imagination, uncertainty, wonder or creativity. If the scientists did not have this belief he would not toil so hard to understand this world or discover fixed laws in terms of which scientific understanding is possible. Such belief of scientists and its actual or assumed truth, deprive an artiste like poet of his very motivation for creating art. According to the proponents and advocates of this view, art is man's gallant protest against the crudities and imperfections of Nature. (Refer to Oscar Wilde's essay "The Decay of Lying — An Observation" and Rabindranath's poem "Nabajatak".) Alternatively, and apparently paradoxically, both scientists and artistes would agree that the sensuous and surface reality, the observable external world given to our sense experience, is full of imperfections. Both scientist and artiste delve deeper — the scientist with his analytical skill and reason and the poet with his poetic vision — and discover at a greater depth, far beyond the surface reality that is revealed to our ordinary experience, a coherent design, a plan of a Great Creator. However it is the scientists who are credited with the *discovery* of what is actually there, may be at a level deeper than what unaided experience of man can fathom. For what the scientists resort to in order to compensate for the limitations of ordinary sense perception is reason (based on experience) which is an objective source of knowledge available to one and all. But what the poet is credited with is the *creation*, and not the discovery, of a perfect and ordered universe or reality. For ordinary men this is (actually) not there outside the realm of poetic fancy. For the artiste takes the help in this matter of artistic or poetic imagination which, in the first instance, everyone does not possess and second, unlike reason imagination is not admitted to be one among the accredited sources of knowledge of fact. Thus the world of scientists and the world of the poet, though equally different from the world of ordinary

experience, are different from each other; the world of the scientist is real but that of the poet or the artiste is imaginary. So even when it is said that it requires a poet to discover the truth at the heart of lies, peace at the heart of violence, light at the centre of darkness, there is no public and objective procedure through which an ordinary man can, after due training, discover what a poet can imagine. *Kavi* or the artiste is sometimes said to be a *seer* rather than creator. However, the discovery he makes, being assisted by his power of poetic imagination, of the deeper "truth" and beauty makes him not so much of a discoverer as a creator. Imagination is a creative faculty, but reason of the scientists is not. An artiste is a visionary. For him the distinction between the imaginary and the truth (of ordinary men) may cease to exist. So Rabindranath could, as a poet, openly and boldly say, "I will say what is true but truth will be my own making". According to both viewpoints, the poet ought to be a creator — only while in the one, the form he creates discloses to us the truth of Nature commonly obscured, though it is there; in the other, they present for our contemplation something that is superior to Nature and is not there.[8]

Another related point is that art either creates or discovers (where this discovery is itself a matter of creative imagination and poetic vision) beauty but in each case it makes living enjoyable. Through the eyes of an artiste the world is experienced as beautiful and attractive rather than as ugly or loathsome. What is so detestable in ordinary life, its sorrows and sufferings, are transformed in the artistic creation and appear as enjoyable. Art therefore promotes a mood, a habit or cast of mind which is marked by attachment. Philosophy, it is said, teaches us detachment. If it were not for this *darśana* could not be a Mokṣaśāstra, a discipline of knowledge which enables man to seek and find spiritual freedom through producing in him the required saving knowledge or understanding. Its method is rational and critical examination of

[8] M. Hiriyanna, 1997, *Art Experience*, p. 21, New Delhi: IGNCA.

our ordinary life and experience, the worldly life of largely factual belief and practical goal. It is still the world of science or real world. However, whereas science describes it to be as it is and as it is made to be by scientific laws. Philosophy is concerned with its worth for a seeker of spiritual freedom. How such a seeker should view this world and live in it, what attitude he must have towards it are what philosophy or at least *darśana* is interested in. *Darśana* teaches us that the world is not really attractive or enjoyable however much it appears to be so.

Some may hold that it would be wrong if one thinks that like philosophy of science or philosophy of physics, philosophy of art is also a viable project. For science or physics is eminently suitable for philosophical treatment, but not so is art. Philosophy like science is a cognitive enterprise, it is or aims at discursive knowledge and theoretical understanding of whatever it deals with; and its method of dealing is intellectual or rational. Art is not such a thing. It is rather a matter of intuitive apprehension or, as is sometimes called, contemplation. In short, art is not amenable to philosophical treatment. It is said that though aesthetic experience and art object are not amenable to rational treatment yet the judgement we pass on artistic creation, and concepts we use to describe them, can be examined and analysed by philosophers. However, to accept this is to accept the possibility of *philosophy of aesthetics* and not of aesthetics as philosophy of art. Philosophy of aesthetics would be an analysis of the language and concepts used in aesthetics, taken as a particular theoretical discipline which describes, explains and evaluates (or, more accurately, lays down rational principle of all these) art in general or particular genre of art. And this analysis etc. are done by using discursive language. The language we use to *create* art, as when a poet writes a poem, is not discursive language. The language of aesthetics is not suitable for the creation or appreciation of art. Though action in which moral value is enshrined is amenable to treatment by the methods by which we study natural scientific phenomena yet the

duty character of this action is beyond scientific description or evaluation. Similarly an artistic creation as a thing of the natural order can be treated scientifically or intellectually or aesthetically. But in so far as a thing submits to such treatment or is amenable to these methods it is not an art proper. Art as art is understood by one to the extent one becomes oneself a sort of artiste. To sum up we need to distinguish carefully art and aesthetics. If aesthetics is possible we can have philosophy of it just as we have philosophy of such disciplines as theology and science. But the question is can we say aesthetics itself is possible, if at least aesthetics means philosophical study of art?

Systematic philosophy in one of its standard senses is a discipline of objective knowledge. Even in his capacity of a philosopher or a scientist a man can be interested in understanding the phenomenon of art as much as those of religious practices and beliefs. We know of recent attempts at computer representations, analysis and calculation of percentage of different emotions the expressions which make up the smile of a famous painting. Anyway, one extreme position will be that art is not amenable to objective study like science or philosophy. Accordingly aesthetics as an objective study or discipline of objective knowledge of artistic creation is ill conceived. Alternatively even a cursory study of the discipline of aesthetics will convince one that it is not only a study of a phenomenon which is not amenable to objective and rational treatment and further it is hardly a system of objective study whether descriptive or explanatory. Philosophy has its identifiable language and method no matter whether it deals with religion or science. Aesthetics is not like that. Its vocabulary, its descriptions all show that art needs even for its description (as distinct from its creation) a language which is specific to art. Aesthetics (Nāṭyaśāstra) even avoids ordinary expressions like cause and effect (which we frequently use in theoretical disciplines like science and philosophy). Just to cite one other example, *dhvani* or *vyañjana* which is the heart of art is "not accepted by any of the

philosophical schools".[9] It is also clear from the definition of *kāvya* "that the intrinsic merit of the *kāvya* rests on only such words and sense as are capable of suggesting the *rasa*, the *bhāva* or *vastu*".[10] Anyway, there is in almost every form of art an element or aspect of non-natural and non-objective, the *alaukika*, which is hardly a matter of theoretical study, in any ordinary sense of the term.

We may be permitted to dwell a little more on the present contrast between art and theoretical study on the one hand and between any one of these two and aesthetics on the other. We said that in some sense or other no theory can ultimately avoid using ordinary language even though this language which we use for daily commerce, is found deficient for purposes of scientists and philosophers in particular and of theoreticians in general. For the artiste, so long as he uses language for the purpose of creating art, as in writing poem or drama, etc. both ordinary language and language adequate for science and philosophy are highly unsuitable. The ideal language of science and philosophy is *literal* language. For art literal language is deficient because it is literal. A literal language can *describe* fact and truth but it cannot describe, not even can adequately *express*, the feeling and emotion *as* feeling and emotion. What science does when it seeks to describe such non-scientific and non-factual phenomenon like say *rasa* is that it *reduces* them first to, say, activations of certain areas in our brain, or to changes in the electro-chemical states of an organism etc. Artiste's objection is that ordinary language is literal or too literal to serve the purpose of a creative artiste and theoretician's objection is that it is not as literal as it should have been if it were to serve the purpose of science or philosophy.

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[9] B. Bhattacharya, 2003, Introduction to Mammaṭa's *Kāvyaprakāśa*, p. vii, Varanasi: Banaras Hindu University.

[10] Ibid., p. ix.

III

That art ignores literal meaning is admitted by the artistes as well as art theoreticians both in India and in Europe. Though in this respect, the position of Indian art theoreticians is more radical. Anyway, this acknowledged difference of language of art from the literal language and artiste's deliberately distancing himself from literal meaning have led modern art critics to argue that classical art was completely devoid of meaning. The characteristic view of some modern art critics is that those who interpret the symbolism of classical art they *read* meaning *into* that symbolism rather than reading meaning in it or of it. The other group of art critics suggests that instead of repeating the mistake of past poets modern poets should enrich their art by utilizing newly-discovered facts and what they afford for art. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy has noted and refuted the first view and documented his refutation by referring to what he called prophetic poems in which he included passages of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads.[11] Joseph Antony Mazzeo has noted and refuted the second position (obviously without reference to Indian art) in his book *Renaissance and Revolution*.[12] The most interesting point, however, is that these two writers traced the mistaken views they criticized respectively to the ideology of progress and, through it, to modern science. Their views and arguments deserve to be noted.

For our present purpose the sum and substance of the matter can be stated in the following way. Art and its character change in course of time. Earlier poetry was deficient in factual content. Since fact is the literal meaning of (ordinary) language, we can also put the matter in this way. Earlier poetry was deficient in literal meaning. This was for two related reasons. In earlier times men were less developed, less developed in respect of (power of) reason

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[11] See A.K. Coomaraswamy, 1989, "The Interpretation of Symbols" in his *What Is Civilisation and Other Essays*, Ipswich: Golgonooza Press.

[12] J.A. Mazzeo, 1967, *Renaissance and Revolution: The Remaking of European Thought*, London: Mathuen & Co.

and intellect as distinct from (that of) senses. So the creations of the artistes of that time had their almost exclusive appeal to senses and not to idea or thought. So there was predominance of the literal and not of the symbolic. But these seem to lead to the opposite conclusion. Earlier art (literature, etc.) were too literal and too much factual. How can we say that earlier art was deficient in factual content. The point is that till sciences developed we had very inadequate knowledge of fact or reality. So in earlier times whatever used to pass for fact was not scientific fact but largely mythical "fact". So the reason adduced in Europe by some modern scholars and discussed and refuted by Mazzeo is that in earlier times when modern science was yet to develop the artistes did not have correct comprehension or deep knowledge and understanding of nature or (literal meaning). They made many factual mistakes or mistakes in respect of literal meaning. Now they have the opportunity of enriching their works by using new similes and metaphors which science has made available through its discovery of new and deeper facts of nature.

But men like Coomaraswamy have noted how profoundly post-renaissance modern scientific culture with its ideology of progress has affected our attitude towards classical works of art and our ability to understand and appreciate them. The historian Mazeeo has elaborately discussed that the idea of progress, more than any other idea, has dominated modern age;[13] more than that he has also shown how this idea has brought science to interact and even interfere with art and theory of art. This happened at different levels and for different reasons. At the more popular level laity came to embrace what is called scientism which helps establishing what in that cast of mind is expected: presence of science should be visible in every sphere of life and experience and this should be evident in all human creation including art. At a more advanced and sophisticated level of discerning literati, the Royal Society

[13] Cf. Mazzeo, 1967, op. cit., p. 275.

played its role in establishing science exactly in the way scientism wanted. Thus even literati could not avoid embracing scientism at least of somewhat sophisticated variety. The Royal Society from the beginning included among its members writers also. These members under the influence of Francis Bacon in particular came to be convinced that the cause of experimental science could not be best served unless language is reformed. And one aspect of this reform was to give precedence to the need of science and interest in it. So long literature was dominant. This assumed or real opposition between science and art is basically a theme of theory of art and not art itself (though, incidentally, Ludwig Wittgenstein's theory of limitation of language has been made the theme of a poetry itself and as such it is the doctrine of certain school of aesthetic thinking). Be that as it may, this issue is actually a basket of many specific issues like wild imagination vs restrained imagination, between living emotion and its recollection, between realism and mysticism in art, of neglect of natural beauty, relationship between creation and appreciation of art, meaning and purpose of the use of imagery in art, etc.

So far we have seen that aesthetics as a theory of art seems a non-starter if beauty is something not amenable to theoretical treatment, whether scientific or philosophical. But this statement itself is a statement of theory or philosophy of art. But the problem of the possibility of rational treatment of poetry has been a problem earlier also. To put it differently, beauty being a matter of sensuous experience and emotional response, it defies communication in a generally intelligible literal language. On the other hand, the effort of modern scientism to bring art in line with science creates no less misgiving among artistes as well as aesthetes. Some extreme expression of such misgiving detects that any natural or artificial object say, "holes dug in the desert; and piles of automobile tires . . . have become works of art. . . . It is this consideration which makes for much of the perplexity in experiencing some modern art"[14]

[14] R. Abel, 1976, op. cit., p. 264.

which seems to almost totally disregard what is called "formal requirement" of art.

But the concern of men like Coomaraswamy is that the modern scientific culture with its ideology of progress has profoundly affected our attitude to classical art and has sought to introduce significant changes in the thoughts and practices of the artistes. A whole lot of new questions have been raised. The broad question is what is the nature of aesthetics and art in the light of scientism — what type of aesthetics and what form of art alone are possible — and how we respond to them? A philosophy of aesthetics needs must discuss these issues.

It is one thing for artistes to be appreciative of science and its extreme importance but it is a different thing to restrict artist's use of metaphor to scientific discoveries only. Alexander Pope said "Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night: God said, Let Newton be! and all was light". Similarly John Keates is said to have advocated the famous equation that truth and beauty are the same as poet representative of the age of science.[15] In fact, creative artistes used many new metaphors and allusions rooted in the achievements of new experimental science. However, this did not always benefit art nor did it always do justice to the artistes themselves. To cite one or two examples, chosen at random, Rabindranath Thakur had some interest in and knowledge of current science. He even wrote a series of small pieces on scientific topics. But he got things not exactly right as to the force exerted by the moon on the earth in one of his otherwise justly famous poems. Percy Bysshe Shelly in his the poem "the Cloud" was scientifically more correct about the succession, successive transformations, of water, vapour, cloud, rain and water and gave it a better poetic description when he wrote "like a ghost from the tomb, like a child from the womb, I rise and unbuild it again". But with all the truths of physical sciences and

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[15] Subodh Chandra Sengupta, 1986, Introduction to *Dhvanyāloka* in Bengali, Calcutta: A. Mookrjee and Co.

psychology on his side Kālidāsa completely destroyed the poetic mood of a reader of his *Meghadūtam* when he wrote almost as an (unnecessary) apology in the lines *dhūmajyotiḥ salilamarutam,* etc. The point is that the use and display of scientific knowledge and allusion to science and scientific facts, truths and discoveries often add least value to poetry as poetry. All the sciences in the works of Santayana's "Three Philosophical Poets: Lucretius, Dante and Goethe", have certainly become outdated but the aesthetic value of their works has not diminished. So it was wrong on the part of Saratchandra, and this could not have been unknown to him, to make an issue of the poor knowledge of science of homoeopathy of the author of a novel which he was reviewing.

The real and more serious interference came from the scientists or more so from science lovers or pro-science and pro-modernity intellectuals like Thomas Sprat in the form of a demand that artistes should use scientific allusions and use science to control free play of imagination. The demand in other words amounted to making poetry a matter, almost solely of *idea* or thought and not of senses alone as it allegedly was before the emergence of modern science and scientific culture. In the process the difference between sense and intellect, and that between imagination and idea came to be overemphasized. The interference of science did not stop short at increasing use, successfully or not, by creative artistes of imageries and metaphors rooted in scientific facts, knowledge and experiments. It influenced the view of the theoreticians of art, the aesthete, the philosopher of art, as to nature of art or works of art, particularly of classical and pre-scientific age. Prior to the birth of science in the seventeenth century the works of art, many came to believe, had no claim to truth nor did they convey any idea. These works had appeal only to senses and not to intellect. And any attempt on the part of art critic or aesthete to find meaning in these works were construed as reading meaning *into* them, as instance of over-interpreting. Coomaraswamy has vehemently criticized this mentality which is of profound importance in any discussion

on aesthetics today. In his bold and well documented paper "The Interpretation of Symbols" he insisted that works like *Ṛgveda* or Genesis, which he classed as prophetic poetry, were beautiful in the same sense in which an elegant equation of science is said to be beautiful. This and what he said next went a long way in defending realism in art and aesthetics. He said, from the point of view of an older and more learned aesthetic personality, beauty is not a mere effect, but it properly belongs to the nature of a formal cause; the beautiful is not the final cause of the work to be done, but adds to the good an ordering to the cognitive faculty by which the good is known as such. And then follows his celebrated assertion "the appeal of beauty is not *to* the senses, but *through* the senses *to* the intellect".[16] Lest my commitment to defending realism in art as in morality, language, knowledge and ontology, gives others the opposite impression, I would like to point out where I differ from the views of men like Sprat.

Sprat wrote *History of the Royal Society* in which he sought to advance the cause of science and scientism along the line of the then Society by making important suggestion about matters literary and linguistic which were bound to affect the creative artistes as well as the views of art critics and aesthetes. Sprat himself also discussed more directly and explicitly what was expected of creative artistes and literatures. What has been said in this regard,

> spring form a *common* impulse, the desire to bring all expression in whatever mode closer to the truth, but the truth defined as the new scientific cosmology of Descartes and Bacon conceived it.[17] Literature, in the last analysis, had to conform to the true nature of the universe *as science was showing it to be*, and Sprat's vision of what the new science said about the world was that the world was both minutely factual and mathematically severe.[18]

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[16] Coomaraswamy, 1989, op. cit., p. 131.

[17] Mazzeo, 1967, op. cit., pp. 318-19. Emphasis added.

[18] Ibid., p. 319.

What these admirers or worshippers of new science seem to want is that poetry should use "up-to-date allusions". Poetry or at least new poetry should "reflect the new learning, the new ideals of order and relation which the scientists of his own time were revealing to the world". I would not just say against all these that "The artist, after all, is not bound to the world of fact", but I am of the opinion that how a poet should use the teachings of science or of any other discipline of knowledge be left to the artiste himself. And his use should be judged not in terms of its scientific accuracy but in terms of what beauty it adds to the art being created and what response it is eliciting from the audience or the spectator of that particular artistic creation. For poet there are no two kinds of fact that of science and art; art is not concerned with the fact. Even when it appears to us that the artiste is making use of science that is hardly of any important consideration from the point of view of art. A poet can use anything that helps him create beauty. Science qua science has nothing to contribute to art but this does not mean that a scientist cannot be a lover or creator of art or that the findings of science cannot be used artistically. The major issue is that a strong belief in the absolutely fixed nature of world and rigidly literal meaning of language tend to kill art and promote science propaganda. Both are equally useless. A poet should be allowed to believe in and speak about what is not a "scientific" factor or a matter of literal meaning. He works with the *excess* of meaning, significance or value that remains of a language or fact, say, even when all that is there literally in it is exhausted by scientific or historical description. An artiste need not be ignorant of science but he has (normally) no use for science as science in his art. If he ever makes use of scientific truth, it is not for its literal character or his own fidelity to fact but for its suggestive function and/or poetic significance. And there is in addition the highly personal character of art as distinct from anonymity of science, its impersonal character. It does not seem to be necessary to dwell on this point at length. We propose to just quote a few lines from

the writings of John Dewey the famous American philosopher and pragmatist. He wrote:

> ... a finely wrought object, one whose texture and proportions are highly pleasing in perception, has been believed to be a product of some primitive people. Then there is discovered evidence that proves it to be an accidental natural product. As an external thing, it is now precisely what it was before. Yet at once it ceases to be a work of art and ... now belongs in a museum of natural history.

Not just its being a fact however beautiful makes a thing an art so also a piece of successful and genuine poetry can be completely devoid of any known rhetorical feature or poetic ornamental sprucing up. The famous verse quoted by Mammaṭa in his *Kāvyaprakāśa*, *yaḥ kaumāraharaḥ*, etc. is a case in point.[19] These considerations reinforce the conclusion that the art as art is almost indefinable. We can feel it but we can hardly explain or describe it in the language of theory like science or philosophy.

IV

Aesthetics is hardly a help to creative artiste; nor does it necessarily help enhancing or deepening artistic enjoyment. None the less philosophers, even scientists and other theoreticians may be interested in studying, from their respective perspectives, various phenomena related to creation and enjoyment of art. Just as philosophers find reason to be seriously interested in the fact of science — scientific knowledge, method, language and so on — and develop a distinct branch of philosophy called philosophy of science independently of the consideration whether or not the scientists find it useful or interesting so also philosophers develop philosophy of art or aesthetics not for the artiste but for philosophers of art themselves. We cannot put artificial check to man's desire to know

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[19] Govind Thakkur, however stated in his *Pradīpa* the opinion that verses such as these are not devoid of *alaṁkāra* as such but there is no explicit *alaṁkaraṇa*.

or limit its scope. However, (philosophical) understanding of art or artistic creation should not be confused with the contemplation or enjoyment which an artiste has as a creator/performer of art or as audience or spectator of artistic creation. In this connection we need also to carefully study the respective roles of the creator and performer in the context of such performing art as music or dance. The composer of a certain particular music or the choreographer of a dance hardly produces/creates the music or the dance. What he does instead is comparable to writing down recipe for the preparation of a particular dish. It is this feature which goes a long way to distinguish why we cannot paint (create) the same painting even twice though the second performance of a ertain music is not seen as just a copy of the first performance. It is during the performance of a certain performing art that the music or the dance gets created. So performing artiste is still an artiste and a creator and not just a copier. The related question of unity of an artistic creation is also very important and fascinating.

To return to our question, even so why, aesthetics is not generally counted by practising philosophers as a branch of mainstream philosophy or its one of the core areas? The case is not the same with philosophy of science. One reason adduced by some Indian thinkers of repute does not seem to be very convincing. They seem to hold that aesthetics as a philosophy of art is not marginalized in mainstream philosophy or distinguished from mainstream philosophy in India. In the view of classical Indian theoretical tradition Rasaśāstra is a branch of chemistry rather than aesthetics or philosophy of art (so we need to be careful about using expression like discipline of *rasa* or Rasaśāstra). In India what corresponds to aesthetics, that is Alaṁkāraśāstra, is not a neglected area of *darśana* but it is altogether an independent discipline, independent of *darśana* and not a branch of it at all. The reason for this as adduced by these scholars is that *darśana* has essentially a soteriologial orientation; it is Mokṣaśāstra. It primarily aims at telling us the

nature and means of spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*) and particularly the nature and means of saving knowledge and the ways of attaining it. The aesthetic experience (*rasānubhūti*), however exalted an experience it may be, is a sort of sensuous enjoyment. Cultivation of power of imagination leading to sensuous enjoyment of various emotions and sentiments is ultimately an impediment rather than help in the path of seeking liberation. So while *yoga* is so central to *darśana* even when it is a system of (spiritual) praxis, Alaṁkāraśāstra is not. This sort of explanation has much to be said in its support. But still we are not convinced for basically two reasons. The first and the minor reason is that many authors of Alaṁkāraśāstra have explicitly stated that the goal of Alaṁkāraśāstra is the same as that of *darśana*.[20] The second and, in our opinion, a better reason is that unlike subjects like science, self, etc. art or artistic creation is not amenable to rational treatment. We can discuss what makes a thing *kāvya*, or a few lines on a paper a good painting; we can discuss style and *alaṁkāras* etc. as we do in aesthetics or Alaṁkāraśāstras, but for all that the fact remains that art as art is not a thing amenable to rational, and intellectual or even theoretical treatment. With this caveat we can have philosophy of aesthetics but not philosophy of art. Aesthetics is not just philosophy of art; it is a distinct genre of literature which seeks to sort of probe into mysterious (*alaukika*) realm of functioning of language through *vyañjana*, and into the nature and genesis of equally mysterious phenomena called *rasa*, *dhvani*, beauty and so on. The problem of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* in art and aesthetics has hardly anything to do with generalization in theoretical disciplines. We will do best if we do not try to reduce or fit aesthetics into any other form of knowledge and literature but leave it as a distinct kind of its own.

[20] Cf. Viśvanātha's *Sāhityadarpaṇa*.

3

Literary Theories in Sanskrit
Basic Concepts and Interrelations

Radhavallabh Tripathi

The following five terms have been taken up in this paper with a view to examine how far the concepts evolved around them tend to build up a comprehensive theory of aesthetics — *chandas, śilpa, anukṛti, rasa* and *alaṁkāra.*

Aitareya Mahīdāsa is said to be the first great theorist in the history of world aesthetics. He defined culture (*saṁskṛti*), art (*śilpa*) and also the creative process in art.[1] The concept of *chandas* as envisaged by Aitareya has in some way or other gone a long way in the development of various theories in diverse art systems. The Upaniṣads, Aitareya Mahīdāsa and Sāyaṇa give twofold explanation with regard to the connotation of the term *chandas* — *chandas* is called *chandas* because it functions as a shield to protect mankind from sins.[2] It is also called so because it dispels death and leads to

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[1] *ātmasaṁskṛtir vāva śilpānicchandomayam vā ।*
etairevajamāna atmānaṁ saṁskurute ॥ — Ait. Br. VI.27

[2] *puruṣasya pāpasambandhaṁ vārayitumācchādakatvācchanda ityucyate।*
taccāraṇyakāṇḍe samāmnāyate . . . chādayanti hi vā evaṁ chandāṁsi pāpāt karmaṇaḥ॥ — Ait. Br. 2.5

athavā cīyamānāgnisantāpasyācchādakatvācchandaḥ। tacca taittirīyā āmamanti - 'prajāpatiragnimacinuta, sa kṣurapavirbhūtvā' tiṣṭhattat, taṁ devā bibhyato nopāyan, te chandobhirātmānaṁ chādayitvopāyan tacchandasāṁ chandastvam ॥ — Taittirīya Saṁhitā 5.6.6

immortality.[3]

The belief that *śilpa* and *chandas* — art and literature — will invariably lead to emancipation — is echoed in some way or other in Indian theories of aesthetics and has led to their association with the concept of *puruṣārtha* (values).[4]

In modern Indian languages like Hindi, the word *śilpa* is used in the sense of craft. But in this tradition, the whole world is supposed to be the *śilpa* of the Supreme Being. Thus *śilpa* incorporates every kind of creativity. Aitareya Mahīdāsa therefore says that all *chandas* is also *śilpa*,[5] and *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa* includes dance, music and playing of instruments amongst the varieties of *śilpa*.[6]

Bhartṛhari says that the cosmos was created out of *chandas*.[7] *Chandas* is also a form of *śilpa*. There is *chandas* in every walk of life, *chandas* in every sentence and word that is uttered. Bharata therefore rightly says:

chandohīno na śabdo 'sti na chandaḥ śabdavarjitam
— *NŚ*, XVIII.47

There is no word devoid of *chandas* and no *chandas* devoid of word.

The concept of *śilpa* imbibing the aesthetic view of life was inherited by Bharatamuni. In his *Nāṭyaśāstra*, he refers to *śilpa* apart from *kalā*:

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[3] *yad vā - apamṛtyuṁ vārayitumācchādayatīti chandaḥ। tadapi chāndogyopansāmnātam — "devā vai mṛtyorbibhyatastrayīṁ vidyāṁ prāviśanste chandobhirātmānamacchādayan yadebhirācchādayantacchandam chandastvam" — Chā.* 14.2

(*Sāyaṇabhāṣya* on *Ṛgveda*, Vaidika Samshodhana MandaL, 1933, Part I, p. 32)

[4] For details see chap. 1, pp. 7-14, in my *Indian Aesthetics Revisited*, CASS, University of Poona, 2006.

[5] See n. 1 above.

[6] *trivad vai śilpam-nṛttam, gītam, vāditram ca। — Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa*

[7] *chandobhya eva prathamaṁ hyetad viśvaṁ vyavartata।*
— *Vākyapadīyam* I

na tajjñānaṁ na tacchilpaṁ na sā vidyā na sā kalā
— *NŚ* II.116 & IXX.143

This idea of *chandas* generated the concepts of *laya* (rhythm), *yati* (pause) and *gati* (movement). These concepts have been very vital not only for dance and music, but for literature also. The trinity of *laya, yati* and *gati* is as essential in Piṅgalaśāstra.

The whole creativity in literature, dance and music proceeds on the base of *laya*. In plastic arts, however, *laya* assumes a different dimension. *Laya* also means repose (*viśrānti*). In the Yoga philosophy, *laya* is a state in the process of *samādhi*.

The concept of *laya* is related to the idea of *gati* and *yati*. Bhoja has enumerated the following *gatis* — *drutā* (fast), *vilambitā* (slow), *madhyā* (medium), *drutavilambitā* (fast and slow), *drutamadhyā* (fast and medium) and *madhyavilambitā* (medium and slow). They are to be used for different types of forms, depiction of different situations or the contents in literature.

An epic poem has its own *laya* that pervades its texture from beginning to end. A novel should also have a *laya*. There can be no *laya* without *gati* and *yati*. While well-defined rules for maintaining *laya, yati* and *gati* are laid down in music (both vocal and instrumental), authors like Bhoja have discussed the concept of *laya* in literature.

Discussing two types of *śilpa*, i.e. *daiva śilpa* and *mānuṣa śilpa*, Aitareya Mahīdāsa says that the *anukṛti* of the former leads to the creation of the latter, i.e. *mānuṣa śilpa*. The word *anukṛti* was first used by Aitareya to explain the creative process of art.

eteṣām devaśilpānām anukṛtīha śilpamadhigamyate।
— *Ait. Br.* XXX.1, pt. III, p. 131

Anukṛti is neither mimesis nor imitation; it is the process of creativity.

Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa (*VDP*) rightly says that process of *anukṛti* is common in plastic as well as the performing arts; and

because of this commonness, all plastic and performing arts are interrelated and to understand and practise any one of them, one has to be thoroughly acquainted with the other. The whole III *khaṇḍa* (part III) of *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* was delivered as a discourse on arts by the Sage Mārkaṇḍeya to King Vajra, who wanted some sculptures to be made. The sage told him that to understand the art of sculpture, he must learn painting, and to know the art of painting he should learn dance, and to understand dance, he must learn music, that includes songs and poetry. The discourse thus is started with the discussion on word and poetry, which included *śravyakāvya* (poetry) and *dṛśyakāvya* (drama) both. *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* adjusts *anukṛti* as a creative process common to all these arts:

vinā tu nṛttaśāstreṇa citrasūtraṁ sudurvidam ।
jagato 'nukriyā kāryā dvayorapi yato nṛpa ॥
— *VDP* III, *khaṇḍa* II.4

You cannot learn *Citrasūtra* without Nṛttaśāstra, as *anukṛti* of the world is to be done in both.

parasyānukṛtirnāṭyam nāṭyajñaiḥ kathitaṁ nṛpa ।
— Ibid. XX.1

O king, theatre is said to be the *anukṛti* of the other — the outward world.

yathā nṛtte tathā citre trailokyānukṛtiḥ smṛtā ।
— Ibid. XXV.5

Just as in dance, in painting also *anukṛti of* all the three worlds is done.

Anukṛti has been accepted as a fundamental principle for art in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata. The whole performance of a play is an *anukṛti* (*tadante 'nukṛtirbaddhā yathā daityāḥ surairjitāḥ* — *NŚ* I.7). The process of *anukṛti* is defined by various other terms like *anukaraṇa*, *anukīrtana*, *anuvyāharaṇa* and *anudarśana*.

lokavṛttānukaraṁam nāṭyametanmayoditam । — *NŚ* I.112

saptadvīpānukaraṇam nāṭyametad bhaviṣyati — Ibid. I.117

yenānukaraṇaṁ nāṭyametanmayā kṛtam — Ibid. I.118

trailokyasyāsy sarvasya nāṭyam bhāvānukīrtanam — Ibid. I.107

bhaviṣyataśca lokasya sarvakarmānudarśakam — Ibid. I.14

hṛṣṭāḥ sambhavan sarve karmabhāvānudarśanat — Ibid. IV.4

Following Bharata, all later authors agree that the drama or the theatre is an *anukṛti* of various states of human life (*avasthānukṛtirnāṭyam*).

Abhinavagupta has objected to taking the term *anukṛti* in the sense of imitation or mimesis. To him, it is a creative process leading to *rasa*-realization.

Rasa is held as the *summun bonum* or the Ultimate in life in this tradition. Bharata and his commentator Abhinavagupta therefore talk of *nāṭyarasa*. The *ācāryas* of Alaṁkāraśāstra discuss *kāvyarasa*. Mātṛgupta has defined various categories of *rasa* according to the types of *abhinaya*, i.e. *vācikaja* (manifesting through verbal delivery), *nepathyaja* (manifesting through costumes and properties) and *svabhāvaja* (manifesting through concentration of mind).

Vācika rasa is the aesthetic experience resulting from a literary text, *āṅgika rasa* is realized through dance movements and *nepathyaja* or *āhārya rasa* is a manifest where there is a proper arrangement of external means for beautification.

rasāstu trividhā vācikānepathyasvabhāvajāḥ।
rasānurūpairālāpaiḥ ślokairvākyaiḥ padaistathā॥

nānālaṁkārasaṁyuktairvāciko rasa ucyate।
karmarūpavayojātideśakālānuvartibhiḥ॥

mālyabhūṣaṇavastrādyairnepathyarasa ucyate।
rūpayauvanalāvaṇyasthairyadhairyādibhir guṇaiḥ॥

rasaḥ svābhāviko jñeyaḥ sa ca nāṭye praśasyate ।
— Mātṛgupta, quoted by Rāghavabhaṭṭa
in *Artadyotanikā* on *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, p. 7

Thus like *nāṭyarasa* and *kāvyarasa*, there can be *nṛtyarasa* and *saṅgītarasa* as well. *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* and Bhoja discuss *citrarasa* and its varieties. Accordingly, there are nine varieties of painting in accordance with these nine *rasas* — *śṛṅgāracitra, hāsyacitra,* etc.).[8] Bhoja however gives eleven types of *citrarasas* by adding *preyān* and one more *rasa* in the list.[9]

The concept of *alaṁkāra* was also given by the Vedic seers. Words are to be imbued with *alaṁkāra* as a suitable offering to the gods. Words themselves thus become divine. Like *rasa*, the concept of *alaṁkāra* also percolates down the theories in various art systems.

The concept of *alaṁkāra* in Sanskrit poetics is marked with a comprehensive approach to arts. Etymologically also, the term *alaṁkāra* (making perfect) stands in agreement with this approach. *Amarakośa* has given three meanings of the term *alam*, i.e. *bhūṣaṇa* (decoration or embellishment), *vāraṇa* (negation or elimination) and *paryāpti* (sufficiency). They are related to surface structure, deep structure and deeper structures in an art form. They are not isolated. The process of beautification incorporates the activity of elimination or exclusion for its culmination in fulfilment (*paryāpti*). This *paryāpti* involves a holistic view and sufficiency at structural level too. This triple process of *bhūṣaṇa, vāraṇa* and *paryāpti* tends to make an artistic creation extraordinary and this extraordinary nature of art is *alaṁkāra*, The *ācāryas* have termed it as *alambhāva* or *alaṁkārabhāva*. Abhinavagupta says:

> *lokottīrṇena rūpeṇāvasthānamityayamevāsāvalaṁkārabhāvaḥ*
> — *Locana* on *DL*, Varanasi edn, p. 499
>
> Remaining in the state of extraordinariness is *alambhāva* or *alaṁkārabhāva*.

In this completeness, each and every category in an art piece would

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[8] *śṛṅgārahāsyakaruṇaraudravīrabhayānakāḥ।*
bībhatsādbhutaśāntāśca nava citrarasāḥ smṛtāḥ॥ — *VDP* III. *khaṇḍa* 43.1

[9] *Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra*, p. 632.

compete with the other ones in an ascending order for creating excellence, encompassing the three levels of human existence, i.e. *ādhibhautika* (empirical), *ādhidaivika* (psychic) and *ādhyātmika* (spiritual). The creative process under *bhūṣaṇa*, *vāraṇa* and *paryāpti* functions on these three levels respectively. Therefore, *alaṁkāra* can be defined as the *sine qua non* in literary art comprising these levels.

These three levels can be further correlated with the three paths in human life — *karma* (action), *bhakti* (dedication) and *jñāna* (knowledge); and their applications in literature yields the following interrelationships:

Process	*Approach*	*Theme*	*World View*	*Genre*	*Śabdavṛtti*
Bhūṣaṇa	*Karma*	Actions	Physical	Figures of speech	*Abhidhā*
Vāraṇa	*Bhakti*	Emotions	Psychological	*Guṇa*, *rīti*	*Lakṣaṇā*
Paryāpti	*Jñāna*	Enlighten-ment	Spiritual	*Rasa*, *bhāvas*	*Vyañjanā*

The fusion of these three levels of existence or their synthesis in literature is an outcome of a holistic approach to life. It brings perfection in art, known as *alambhāva* (the state of wholeness or sufficiency and the experience of this state) in our tradition. Poetry and arts are sometimes called *alaukika* (unearthly) to point out the fact that this state of fulfilment is not reached in worldly endeavours, and this holistic concept of *alaṁkāra* also provides us a canon to examine art and literature. Authors like Daṇḍin, Vāmana and Bhoja viewed *alaṁkāra* in this wide context.

Alaṁkāra is a technical term in music and musicology. The use of *alaṁkara* generates various layers in *svaras*, Besides *alaṁkāras* in singing, *alaṁkāra* is also employed in instrumental music, particularly in *avanaddha* type of instruments. There *alaṁkāra* leads to harmony amongst various instruments. The combinations of particular notes (*svaras*) which enhances the *rakti* or *rāga* involving peculiar use of *varṇas* is *alaṁkāra*.

The autonomy of an art system is recognized and there is due emphasis on its own identity, that is maintained in various arts by such concepts as *Nāda-Brahman*, *Śabda-Brahman*, *Vāstu-Brahman*, etc.; and also by the typical techniques that are related to a particular art, the fundamental unity of various arts and their aim in the form of realization of *puruṣārtha* is also accepted.

4

Indian Aesthetics and Art
A Conceptual Overview

Ranjan K. Ghosh

THE basic objective of the paper is to present a conceptual analysis of the Indian approach to art and its aesthetical tradition. The paper seeks to look at the Indian aesthetical thinking in terms of the views of some of the important modern Indian thinkers on art. In doing so it takes note of Western approaches to art in order to develop, though briefly, some of the points of divergence and possible convergence between the two streams of thought. Traditionally, Indian art has been regarded as religion-centric that has a spiritualistic objective. The distinction drawn by Indian thinkers between empirical beauty and ideal beauty is at the heart of such thinking. A similar distinction has also been drawn between life emotions and ideal emotions. In what follows, we shall have occasion to consider these points in some detail as well as bring out their significance in the context of art and its experience.

I

Indian thinkers on the question of art develop a viewpoint that is *experience*-centric; in comparison, the Western approach may be regarded by and large as *object*-centric. This has to do with the way the distinction between art and life is drawn. The central issue concerning the debate about the art/life divide may be outlined here, briefly. If art were to have a distinctive status its *discontinuity* with life would seem axiomatic. But this will also provide an

occasion for asking for a satisfactory explanation as to the *relevance* of art to life. On the other hand, if the discontinuity thesis is not subscribed to or is underplayed we would be left with the difficulty of providing adequate justification for some of the things that we say about art and the significance that we attach to such locutions.

We may begin by considering that there is a broad distinction made between art and life at the level of *objects* or their kind from the perspective of Western cultural tradition. This has been referred to as the "museum or gallery culture". For example, certain specially designed objects are identified as works of art and preserved securely within the confines of the museum or gallery. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy points to this as "the essential *opposition* of the Museum to the world".[1] The assumption underlying such "opposition" is not so much the purpose for which the works of art are made but rather the "aesthetic surface". The object-centric approach to art has the tendency to bypass or overlook the *experiential* content of the work of art and its categorical distinction from other common experiences in life. Barring some honourable exceptions, the Western thinker has generally been suspicious of the talk about access to any privileged experience. Somehow, the Platonic idea of *mimesis* has always cast its long shadow, as it were, on every attempt at conceptualizing art. Even when it stopped its direct influence, the related idea that the work of art must be viewed in terms of its *objective* properties continues to provide the basic assumption for the Western thinker to look for a definition. The hollowness of such an approach has in more recent years given way to the view that art is an "essentially contested concept",[2] and as, Morris Weitz concludes that defining art in terms of some essential characteristic is a "logically vain attempt".[3]

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[1] A.K. Coomaraswamy, 1984, *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art*, p. 13, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal (repr.).

[2] See W.B. Gallie, 1956, "Art as an Essentially Contested Concept", *Philosophical Quarterly*, 6: 97-114.

[3] M. Weitz, 1956, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 16: 27-35.

Not only this. The object-centric bias germinates confusion at the level of aesthetic discourse. One is left wondering as to what sense to make of locutions of the sort "This music is *sad*", "This painting is *warm*", etc.? Are the emotions that are felt vis-à-vis works of art of the same kind as those that are felt in life? Moreover, the sense of puzzlement at the attribution of terms like "sad", "warm", etc. to inanimate objects (or artefacts) finds expression in terms of some philosophical teasers. In more recent times, many a thinker has taken the line of argument that locutions about works of art such as sad and warm, can be intelligible if only art and life are *not* irrevocably held apart. In other words, from the consideration that we are able to make use of much the same kind of attributions to works of art as we do with regard to life situations — an argument is constructed to engineer the collapse of the art/life divide.[4] Such attempts have led only to the trivialization of art. The possible reasons for a consuming preoccupation with the object of art have been attributed to the "fear of psychologism" as well as to the "standard conception of aesthetic experience as something dominated by a trivial concern with pleasure, sensuality, and emotion".[5] The profound *inadequacy* of such a philosophic perspective becomes clearly manifest as we look at the mainstream of Indian tradition by way of comparison.

II

Now, it is significant that Indian thinker does not feel preoccupied with the *mere* object of art or with the *classificatory* sense in which to define it. For him, art is a source and order of *experience* that *transcends* all mundane emotions and sensuality. Here one draws

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[4] See Nick McAdoo, 1992, "Can Art Ever Be Just About Itself", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 50(2): 131-35; also for a rejoinder to some of these points, Ranjan K. Ghosh, 1996, "Notes Towards Understanding the Art/Life Divide", *JICPR*, XIII(3), May-August.

[5] Richard Shusterman, 1992, *Pragmatic Aesthetics: Living, Beauty, Rethinking Art*, pp. 27-29, Oxford: Blackwell.

a distinction between life emotions and aesthetic emotions. Thus Sri Aurobindo speaks of the "persistent freedom of oriental art, its refusal to be shackled or debased by an imitative realism".[6] For him, the true aim of art is to create "spiritually aesthetic *ānanda*".[7] Again, Coomaraswamy[8] distinguishes Indian art as religion-centric. The content of such art is not mere imitation of nature or the phenomenal world. Rather than what the physical eye registers it seeks to capture the essential truth underlying the physical world of senses. Realism in terms of the nature of imitation of an object actually seen at the time of painting is quite antipathetic to imagination, and it does not find a place in the ideal of Indian art. So, an important distinction is drawn between *ideal beauty* and *empirical beauty*. While ideal beauty is given only as a *mental image* that is formed by the imagination it must be distinguished from the retinal image.

From the Indian perspective, artistic creativity is an intensely inward journey undertaken for the purpose of reaching out to the Ultimate Reality. Indian art seeks to discover and suggest the *Idea* behind the sensuous appearance. The seeming reality of the empirical world is not the ideal world of true reality. Coomaraswamy rightly points out that no truly Indian sculpture has been wrought direct from a living model, or any religious painting copied from the life. For that matter, such inwardization of the visual image bears the stamp of "a spiritual discovery" rather than a creation.[9] The artist "sees" the image in his minds' eye and seeks to represent his vision in terms of line and colour. Thus one can see the boldly executed images in Indian paintings with clearly drawn lines and contours without any vague or fuzzy details. The strong flowing

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[6] Sri Aurobindo, 1995, *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, p. 226, Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram (8th Impression).

[7] Ibid., p. 243.

[8] A.K. Coomaraswamy, 1981, *Essays in National Idealism*, pp. 27-28, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal (repr.).

[9] Ibid., p. 19.

lines are definitive in their character and the colours are applied flatly over the contoured areas. There is no deliberate attempt to create an illusion of three-dimensionality of the phenomenal reality.

The primary aim of Indian art is not to provide *sensuous* pleasure, nor even to impart *moral* instruction, but rather to present a vision imbued with *spiritual import*. In art, we are concerned with *idealized* emotions rather than actual or real emotions. The former constitute the object of *contemplation* for us, the latter are actually undergone and responded to in life through action and behaviour. In other words, while life provides the raw material for art what are created are idealized emotions for the sake of our contemplation and understanding. The distinction made in the Indian aesthetical tradition between life emotion and idealized emotion is crucial in understanding why aesthetic emotion is always enjoyable; actual emotion, on the other hand, may be pleasurable or painful.[10]

As indicated earlier, the Western theorist has generally acknowledged the primacy of the object of art, and this is reflected in their general preoccupation with the beautiful as an *objective* quality of a work of art. So, even when there is any attempt to understand the nature of aesthetic experience the general direction it takes is one in which one seeks to enter the object, as it were, in order to enjoy the object. The ratiocinative underpinning of such a view of art involves that the objective features of the work of art be delineated comprehensively so that one may look for some such distinctive characteristic as could then claim to be the defining quality of art. That such attempts have generally failed can only be taken as a pointer to the inadequacy of the underlying theoretical or conceptual framework.

III

Significantly, the Indian conception of art does not fall into such a logical impasse. In virtue of its contemplative nature the theory of

[10] See Ranjan K. Ghosh, 1987, "Artistic Communication and Symbol: Some Philosophical Reflections", *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 27: 319-25.

rasa quite succeeds in pre-empting the conceptual difficulties that generally arise from the Western theorists' object-centric view of art. We may point out here that the experience-centric conception of art lends itself to a discourse that does not readily make room for the kind of philosophical confusions and puzzlements that befuddle the Western thinker. For example, the Western thinker is ever so much intrigued by the consideration that one "enjoys" the *sad* music or the *violence* in a film. The theory of *rasa*, on the other hand, is quite eminently suitable for resolving all such issues. The distinctive characteristic of the *rasa* theory is that it provides for a sense of *transcendence* over the mundane by drawing a clear distinction between art emotions and life emotions. Nor does the Indian theorist have to face the kind of difficulties that his Western colleague does in his quest for a defining characteristic of art. Further, in the Indian context the distinction between the *classificatory* and *evaluative* senses of art is not warranted at all. But because of the Western theorist's preoccupation with the *object of art* and its objective features he finds it necessary to refer to the *classificatory* sense of art as different from its evaluative sense though such distinction remains elusive and unworkable after a point.

Now the key concept in the Indian aesthetical vocabulary is *rasa* that is used to explain both what is created by the artist as well as what is experienced by the competent audience. The theory of *rasa* clearly distinguishes between real-life experiences of emotions and the experience that arises in art. Thus follows the famous *Rasasūtra* of Bharata: *vibhāva-anubhāva-vyabhicāri-saṁyogād rasa-niṣpattih*.[11] The aesthetic emotion or the *rasa* is at once set apart from real-life emotions as the word *niṣpattiḥ* in the *sūtra* has been interpreted to mean not in terms of a material cause–effect production. In the *niṣpattiḥ* of *rasa* the triadic relationship of *vibhāvas*, *anubhāvas* and *vyabhicāribhāvas* is one of unity. In this respect the *rasa* experience

[11] Manomohan Ghosh (tr.), 1961, *The Natyasastra*, chap. VI, Calcutta: The Asiatic Society.

is at once marked off from life experiences. The latter, on the other hand, is based on the interplay of causal relations at every level.

The key idea here is that aesthetic contemplation involves an active orientation of the mind. The competent viewer is called upon to actively participate in her interaction with the work of art; for the *rasa* cannot be evoked in a passive state of mind. In the Indian tradition, such a state of experience is accorded a high value and is considered proximate only to the state of Ultimate Reality and is thus described as *alaukika* (non-ordinary).

This has been explained more recently in a logically more elegant manner though somewhat differently by K.C. Bhattacharyya who speaks of it as "duplicated sympathy".[12] Bhattacharyya considers the art situation in the context of three grades of feeling. The primary object feeling may be understood as, for example, the child's experience of playing with a toy, so that for the child the feeling of joy is not distinguishable from the object. At the second level, a person who observes the child and the sense of joy and identifies his feeling with that of the child. Such "feeling of feeling" or "sympathy" is quite detached from the object but not from the feeling of the child for the toy. Aesthetic enjoyment may be considered at a level even higher than this. Now, imagine another person who identifies himself with the person who enjoys the feeling of the child for the toy. The feeling of this third person may be characterized as "sympathy with *sympathy*". It is at this higher level of "duplicated sympathy that a feeling can be emotionally contemplated in a detached way".[13] The feeling of "duplicated sympathy" with which aesthetic enjoyment is identified may also have two different kinds of thrusts depending on the direction in which sympathy moves. In the primary sense of sympathy a person may be either in the objective or subjective attitude. In the

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[12] K.C. Bhattacharyya, 1983, "The Concept of Rasa", in G. Bhattacharyya (ed.), *Studies in Philosophy*, p. 355, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

[13] Ibid.

objective attitude the subject lapses itself in the object, but in the subjective attitude the object is assimilated in the subject. According to Bhattacharyya, aesthetic enjoyment also comes about by means of these two different directions of the attitude, but there is a very important distinction that will bring out the Indian approach to the whole matter more clearly. The objective attitude is "projective or creative" in that the enjoyer transposes himself into the object in order to feel the soul of it. At the level of aesthetic enjoyment what it would mean is that the enjoyer will reactively enter into the third person (who feels sympathy with the primary object feeling) in order to feel sympathy with his sympathy. On the other hand, the subjective attitude has the direction, which is "assimilative or abstractive", and in this, the enjoyer feels the other person's sympathy as his own feeling. Bhattacharyya characterizes this as the Indian approach to art. In this subjective attitude the enjoyer seeks freedom by dissolving the object in his own self by which what is meant is that at the level of feeling the object is abstracted as *value* rather than as fact.

In virtue of its contemplative nature the theory of *rasa* quite succeeds in pre-empting the conceptual difficulties that generally arise from the Western theorist's object-centric view of art. The enjoyer of art frees himself from the object, and this is done by abstracting away from it the universalized content of feeling that the object embodies. The enjoyer sympathizes with the sympathy, which an actual or imaginary person may have with the primary object feeling of the actual or imaginary character. Bhattacharyya has rightly clarified that in his consideration of the "duplicated sympathy" as an aesthetic category, the primary object, the character who enjoys it and the sympathizer are links in a chain regardless of their (any or all) actual or imagined existential status.

Now, to put the matter in a perspective, in the main tradition of Indian aesthetics, *rasa* stands for what is created by the artist as well as what is experienced by the audience. *Rasa* as the created is not the same as what merely goes into its making. The competent

viewer (*rasika*) is called upon to actively participate in his commerce with the work of art by detaching himself from his immediate egoistic interests. The emotion experienced in art is not felt by the viewer as personal or as that of the artist; rather it is universal or transpersonal. This way the distinction between art emotion and life emotion becomes meaningful in the context of the theory of *rasa*.[14]

The theoretical underpinnings of the traditional Indian approach to art seem to have been carried on till even the time that the Bengal School of Art dominated the scene, though some elements of technique such as wash technique were imbibed from Japanese artistic practices. Significantly, about this period Tagore himself remained quite uninfluenced by what was happening around him. To this creative genius the idea of a "national" art movement was unacceptable, or at least not very inspiring. Tagore, who had been exposed to modernistic movements on European scene, regarded art in terms of an International phenomenon. Further, the artists of the Calcutta progressive group as also those in Mumbai (then, Bombay) brought about a paradigm shift in their approach to art which was deeply influenced by the movements in the West. Many of these artists came stylistically closer to the contemporary artists and art movements in the European arena though in terms of their images and imageries they remained distinctively Indian.

IV

Significantly, Tagore broke many a convention of the day in his drawings and paintings. He seems to substitute his innate grasp of

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[14] For a fuller account, please see, Ranjan K. Ghosh, 2006, *Great Indian Thinkers on Art: Creativity, Aesthetic Communication, and Freedom*, chap. II, Delhi: Black & White (an Imprint of Sandeep Prakashan).

I have also elsewhere discussed how the *rasa* theory succeeds in reconciling the seemingly opposed views of aesthetic naturalism and historicism. Please also see, Ranjan K. Ghosh, 2003, "Art as Dramatization and the Indian Tradition", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 61(3): 293-95.

rhythm for what one learns from conventional technical training. The whole course of his creative journey faintly echoes the Crocean model in which one begins with some nebulous, tentative images and through the process of "expression" comes upon the final creative form. Tagore avowedly builds up an intimate relationship with the medium on hand. It is his sensitivity to the medium of poetic expression that spurs him on to erase or to cut out a word or group of such words in a poem. Again, his sensitivity to the visual medium of line and space prompts him to let certain interesting visual forms or patterns to emerge by joining the erased out portions on the paper. His later paintings are an eloquent testimony to his visual sensitivity as he carries on with such linear forms and their relationship. In these works, he has no pre-thought ideas as to what forms are going to take shape. He seems to move on as though inexorably towards some unknown terminal goal which may come to him as a "discovery" with its attendant sense of joy.

The art of painting eludes me like a shy mistress and moves along subtle ways — unbeknown to me. Her ways are such that I am reminded of what the Vedas say: *ko vedaḥ*. Nobody knows — perhaps not even the Creator.... It is the tide of creation itself which bears it along its own current.[15]

As an artist, Tagore almost assumes the role of a *dispassionate* observer to see how the *lines* behave in a certain manner so as to make way for an organic form to emerge. The metaphysical moorings of such a view must remain inescapable to anyone who reflects on it. Lines and forms come to have an organic character in virtue of which the painting gets charged with life of its own, maybe regardless of the artist's own *conscious* desires. Indeed there does seem something mystical about the whole creative process whereby the artist is made to feel somewhat distanced in the background as the emerging work comes to assume autonomy of its own. Second,

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[15] P. Neogy (ed.), 1961, *Rabindranath Tagore on Art and Aesthetics (A Selection of Lectures, Essays, and Letters)*, p. 110, New Delhi: Orient Longman.

the artist has the experience of being *overtaken* by some force that is quite beyond him in the empirical sense. The work of creation embodies an *inner* force, as it were, that guides the artist to move in a certain definite fashion. For Tagore, to participate in this creative process is to feel one with the Supreme Person. Spontaneity is not mere chaos, but rather a felt unity of personal being with the rhythmic harmony of creation. One can clearly discern here almost the very process of transition from the realm of the oppressive facts and their underlying impersonal laws, customs and conventions to the boundless sense of joy that comes by transcending these. Thus in his early works of drawings and paintings Tagore seems to experience an emotional unity with the universe of form as he seeks to transform the scratches and cuttings in his manuscript into a vibrant rhythmic whole. Tagore's later paintings exemplify how in breaking the external crust of conventions his creative being expresses its sense of endless freedom. It is perhaps when confronted with such a mood that he refers to the desultory lines as those that "obstruct the freedom of our vision with the inertia of their irrelevance".[16] From Tagore's perspective it seems important to note that the artist in his personal relationship with the world is able to transcend it and when he takes to the creative process he responds to the internal principle of rhythmic unity that pertains to the specific physical medium used for the purpose.

It would be worthwhile here to consider how creativity has been understood by some of the contemporary Western thinkers. As for the question, what is it that goes on in artistic creation? John Hospers rightly says, "Creation is a kind of *activity*. But not all kinds of activity are creative."[17] For example, playing a game is also an activity, but such activity cannot be described as creative. A game is played according to a precise set of instructions or rules.

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[16] P. Neogy (ed.), 1961, *Rabindranath Tagore on Art and Aesthetics (A Selection of Lectures, Essays, and Letters)*, p. 110, New Delhi: Orient Longman.

[17] John Hospers, 1985, "Artistic Creativity", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, XLIII(3): 244.

In a creative activity, one does not know what the final product would be like. Hospers clarifies that if a poet "envisaged at the outset exactly what the poem would be like, with every word in its proper order, then he would already have created the poem: the creative process would already be complete. Thus, the idea of an end-product that he has at the beginning can't be all that detailed; perhaps it is just a kind of potentiality, as the acorn is to the oak tree."[18] What Hospers says here seems to echo Immanuel Kant's idea of creativity and lucidly brings out the crucial point in this regard. According to Kant,[19] genius is the talent for creating art that may be looked upon as an "exemplar". What this means is the ability of the work of art to induce thoughts in the mind of the viewer, but such ideas (which Kant characterizes as "aesthetic ideas" as distinguished from "rational ideas") do not correspond to and are not subsumed under any *concept*. This indeed is the hallmark of a worthwhile work of art: The creative artist not only has access to the *representation of imagination* but has the talent for putting it forth in an appropriate form of *expression*.

The closest approximation to Kant's view of creativity is perhaps to be found in Tagore's idea of "rhythmic unity" whereby the artist feels overtaken by the tide of the creative process as though inexorably moving towards an unknown terminal goal. This "end" must be understood as the unfolding of the logical possibility that the work "has" within it and not a mere wish or desire that the artist may have at the start of the work. Only genius can make it happen so that the intention of the artist would seem to be fused with the intentionality of the *work*.

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[18] John Hospers, 1985, "Artistic Creativity", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, XLIII(3): 244.

[19] See, Immanuel Kant, 1973, *The Critique of Judgement*, tr. J.C. Meredith, Oxford: Clarendon Press (repr.). Also for a critical discussion, See Ranjan K. Ghosh, 2004, "Fine Art, Creativity, and Kant: Some Philosophical Reflections", *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* (Special Number), 200 Years of Kant, Jan.-Oct., 31: 229-52.

V

No doubt, Kant, as much as Tagore, clearly acknowledges that the process of creative activity is not of a kind that could be predicted or explained in terms of some pre-given rule. As an afterthought we may perhaps add that every work that is produced by the artist is not a successful work of art. The artist knows of no formula or else it would become easily possible for him to turn out only masterpieces. Convergence of views on this matter between Tagore and Kant seems clear enough. For Tagore, as pointed out earlier, the "tide of creation" is what prompts the nature of the finished product of art. It is not the pre-thought out decision, nor any external prompting, that the artist is required to follow, but rather his own inner sense of being with the principle of rhythmic unity that carries him forward in the process of creation.

At least two points stand out clearly. One, Tagore's linking of art and the creative process to the *personality* of the artist. Creative impulse is what overflows as *surplus* to the inner being of the artist in spite of its attendant limitations. It is not so much a matter of learning or mastering the rules and techniques of making art in a physical medium that makes way for the creative impulse to release itself. Rather, the experience of oneness and unity with the cosmic creation infuses in the artist a sense of infinitude that in turn expresses itself in a spontaneous flow of creative input. Art is not mere *making*; it is an *expression* of one's *personality*. Its source lies in the *internal* principle of rhythmic unity, and not in any external set of rules and techniques. The authenticity of the artwork is to be judged not in terms of its conformity to a set of rules or techniques, but rather by the fact that it owes to a *personalized* relation of the artist to the world around such that it is characterized by love, harmony and a sense of unity.

It seems clear that for Tagore a painting is not a mere vehicle of some useful information about this world or life. Nor is it a source of hedonistic pleasure; nor yet a didactic means of moral knowledge. Art has a fourth dimension that supersedes all others. This is its

aesthetic dimension whereby it connects us to the spiritual. In this respect, Tagore was in line with the Indian tradition that stands for identifying aesthetic experience or *rasa* experience as akin to *brahmānubhūti* (experience of the Absolute). Aesthetic and spiritual go hand in hand and supersedes all other uses of art — hedonistic, didactic and cognitive. Again, it is this spiritual dimension that takes one into the realm of freedom. Everything that goes on in art or creative activity brooks no bondage to the facts and the related rules of the mundane life. The inner core of the artwork is defined by the principle of rhythm and harmoniousness.

At least, two points merit attention here for a proper appreciation of Tagore's standpoint. In the first place, Tagore's conception of reality is one that is given to us only in and through emotion and imagination; we can *feel* whatever is revealed by Reality, rather than being able to cognize the same intellectually. We are immediately reminded of Kant's dichotomy between noumenon and phenomenon, and his further point that the former can never be an object of knowledge or Reason. What needs to be stressed here is this. Reason, for Kant, is incapable of knowing or cognizing Reality. Thus noumenon falls outside the domain of our knowledge. Interestingly, Tagore clearly seems to agree with such a position taken by Kant. He turns to emotion that, for him, promises to offer the Real for a direct realization. We may also recall that even the Romantics in the West too seem to have been inspired by the Kantian position as they turned to emotion rather than reason in negotiating with reality. A direct realization of the Real by the emotional self is of a piece with Tagore's philosophical conviction as well as part of our heritage from the Upaniṣadic teaching. It must be added, however, that when Tagore speaks of the emotional self for realizing the Real he posits a self that is capable of detaching itself from selfish motives and desires. This leads us to the second point that we want to stress here. Again like Kant, he pleads for "detachment from all practical consequences" in order to experience the sense of delight that comes from our

realization of the Real. Indeed, Kant speaks of such delight as "disinterested" in nature though he does not relate such delight to his conception of the noumenon. Tagore, who is rooted in the ancient Indian philosophical tradition of reality, which is in the nature of *sat-cit-ānanda* (being-consciousness-bliss), naturally inherits an experience-centric approach to life and reality and integrates it into his philosophy of art. Realization of the Real consists in experiencing bliss that comes only by transcending the mundane. Thus, aesthetic delight, as distinguished from ordinary pleasure, is intrinsically akin to spiritual bliss.

5

Indian Music
An Introduction

Bharat Gupt

INDIAN music is the most dominant form of Asian music. Its influence extends beyond the subcontinent into China and the Far East on one side and through Iran, Iraq and Turkey up to Greece on the other. It still preserves the oldest tradition of playing the monophonic melodic line untouched by the use of vertical harmony and tempered scale. It has the most complicated and varied system of rhythmic cycles and is still based upon the ancient concept that the human voice is the foremost expression of musical emotion and therefore all instruments should also be played to imitate and accompany it. Consequently, it also preserves the lyric and its literary content as a major feature but does not maintain a system of a written notational score to be followed while performing. Except for the lyrics, most of the structure and score of the music is created by the performer during performance along certain traditionally accepted norms.

Historical–Cultural Roots

The earliest kind of Indian music consists of the Vedic *mantras* or chants (various scholars dating it from second to fifth millennium BCE) in ancient Sanskrit verses employed in the religious rites of sacrifices offered to the gods. These chants were tri-tonal in the recitation of the *Ṛgveda* but later employed seven notes in the descending order in the singing of *Sāmaveda*. Descriptions of the

non-ritual music of the times do not survive but some later texts like the *Nāradīyaśikṣā* do state the differences between the Vedic chants and the non-Vedic music of the times.

The Classical Period

A more detailed description of the secular music is found in the classical period in the great work of theatre theory called *Nāṭyaśāstra* (fifth century BCE) by Bharata Muni. Here we find an extensive musicological account of the grammar and practice of Indian music which prevailed in ancient India and lasted till medieval times. Music is called *gandharva* in *Nāṭyaśāstra* after the region of "Gandhāra" (modern Kandahar in Afghanistan) which must have been a great centre of music in the past to name the art after it. Even in *Nāṭyaśāstra*, a category of celestial musicians were called *gandharvas*. It has been suggested that the Greek Kentauros, also adept in the arts, are a version of *gandharvas*, indicating thus the musical links between Greek Ionia and western India.

For Bharata Muni music was named *gandharva* because it was dear to the celestial *gandharvas*. On the nomenclature *gandharva*, apart from the reason that the art was given the name as it was then most highly developed in Afghanistan (Kandahar), the name *gandharva* has another meaning: being dear to gods and the creatures called *gandharvas*, music is a means to spiritual upliftment and its performance always results in earning unseen spiritual merit (*adṛṣṭaphala*). Renewal of such a conviction is much needed today when classical Indian music is fast becoming a promising road to stardom and commercial success. Its present-day performers and promoters need to be reminded that a fresh spiritual input expressed through new compositions can give another lease of life to Indian music, as it has done many times earlier in history.

Gandharva is defined by Bharata Muni as "that which is a mixture of strings and other instruments, and which has three basic elements of *svara*, *tāla* and *pada*. This definition is a corrective for our concept of music in which the verbal content is no longer

considered as a basic element but as an intervention. For the ancients, *pada* (song) was the beginning of music, strings were the middle and drumming was the end. Music as merely notes and rhythm, *svara* and *tāla,* was inconceivable. The instruments emulated the human voice and the drums followed its rhythmic statement. This pattern obtains even now in Indian music. The post-renaissance European concept of music as instrumental tonal orchestration has de-privileged the verbal composition, as a result of which, there is a revision in the concept of music even in traditional societies. That music is primarily *svara* and *tāla,* seems to be a growing view among urban musicologists and music critics in India. That is why one hears terms like *rāga saṅgīta, kaṇṭha saṅgīta* and *vādya saṅgīta* which have acquired legitimacy in discussions on music and are now dislocating traditional terms like *rāgadārī, gāyana* and *vādana.* Bharata Muni's *gandharva* should remind us of the necessity of words, i.e. the logocentric elements (*vyakta śabda*) in determining the final meaning (*artha niṣpatti*) of music in coordination with notes and rhythm, i.e. the non-sensical elements (*avyakta śabda*).

The Ancient Scales or Grāmas and Jātis

During the age of the formulation of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* certain melodic tunes called the *jātis* were in vogue all over India. This fund of *jātis* was used to formulate scale-groups (*grāmas*), scales (*mūrcchanās*), notes (*svaras*) and note intervals or microtones (*śrutis*). The Indian septet was not made of the tetrachords like the Greek one, but consisted of two trichords. *Ṣaḍja, ṛṣabha* and *gandhāra* was one trichord, while *pañcama, dhaivata* and *niṣāda* was the other. They were placed on either side of the middle note called *madhyama.* In short signs the notes could be put as:

sā, ri, gā, mā, pā, dhā, ni.

A sequence of any seven notes was called a *mūrcchanā.* Unlike the universal practice now, the first note of the septet (or scale) was not always the tonic, that is *sā* or "do". Any note of a *mūrcchanā* could be

made the tonic. In their so-called natural positions in a septet, *ṣaḍja* and *madhyama* made a consonance of fourth, as did *madhyama* and *niṣāda*. *Ṣaḍja* and *pañcama* made a consonance of fifth. This septet was also fixed as the first *mūrcchanā* of the *ṣaḍjagrāma*. By placing the tonic on one note at a time, that is for the first *mūrcchanā* at *sā* for the second at *ri*, seven *mūrcchanās* could be obtained. This scale-group was called the *ṣaḍjagrāma* and its seven pure *mūrcchanās*.

The other generic scale called the *madhyamagrāma* was obtained in the following manner. In the fourth *mūrcchanā* of the *ṣaḍjagrāma*, that is the scale *mā, pā, dhā, ni, sā, ri, gā*, an alteration was made. A consonance of fourth was created between *pā* and *ri* (which would mean that *pā* was lowered slightly by what is called a diesis (Pythagorean) thus changing the scale. And then seven *mūrcchanās* were obtained by placing the tonic each time at one note. Thus all the scale-groups of the *madhyamagrāma* and its seven pure *mūrcchanās* had a consonance of fifth between *pā* and *ri* notes. In other words, all scales that had a consonance of fifth between *sā* and *pā* were categorized in the *ṣaḍjagrāma* and all the scales in which there obtained a consonance of fifth between *pā* and *ri* were put in the *madhyamagrāma*. *Ṣaḍjagrāma* contained seven *jātis*, namely, *ṣaḍjī, ārṣabhī, dhaivatī, naiṣadī, ṣaḍjoḍicyava, ṣaḍjakaiśikī* and *ṣaḍjamadhya*. *Madhyamagrāma* contained eleven *jātis*, namely, *gāndhārī, madhyamā, gandharodicyava, pañcamī, gāndhārapañcamī, raktagāndhārī, madhyamodicyava, nandayanti, karmaravi, andhrī* and *kaiśikī*.

All the prevalent tunes of the times, i.e. the *jātis* were put into either *grāma* and by further flattening or sharpening of *gā* and *nī* more variations were made. *Nāṭyaśāstra* has classified eighteen *jātis*, seven as pure and eleven as hybrid. The pure could make 146 modified forms. The hybrid also had many variations. Besides, a third *grāma* called *gandharvagrāma* was believed to have been in vogue but was said to have gone out of use very early.

No Fixed Pitch or Sā as the Tonic in Ancient Indian Music

It should be noted that there was no concept of a fixed pitch for

the notes in ancient India as there is still none in Indian music. The tonic was also shifted from the one note to another, it could be on *sā* or *ri* or any other note, to create a different *mūrcchanā* but the actual tuning of the harp which always accompanied the singer would not be altered so drastically.

Melodic Expansion: A Major Feature

The fundamental concepts needed to expand upon a melodic structure were well formulated by the time of *Nāṭyaśāstra* and they continue to be practised till date albeit with change of names. The ten characteristics of a *jāti* that gave shape to its presentation continue to do so for a *rāga* today. *Aṁśa* was the most dominating note of the melody and was also the tonic. *Graha* was the note with which an exposition was begun and *nyāsa* the note to which the performer returned each time on the completion a melodic phrase. *Apanyāsa* was the note auxiliary to *nyāsa*. *Tāra* was the upper register and *mandra* the lower. When only six out of the seven notes of the scale were used for a melody, the usage was called *ṣaḍava* and when five it was named *auḍava*. Abundant usage of certain notes was named *bahutva* and sparing usage was named *alpatva*. In modern times, *aṁśa, graha, nyāsa* and *apanyāsa* are practised but vernacular terms are used for these usages.

From the descriptions of these and concepts it seems that the *jāti*s were sung pretty much as are the *rāga*s today. The preliminary wordless expansion of the melody called *ālāpanā* was made and then compositions to the accompaniment of the drums rendered. The embellishments were also quite the same. There is, however, no clear indication that any instrument or a set of voices produced the tonic and its consonant as a constant drone in the way the modern instrument *tambūrā* does for all kinds of Indian music today.

Relationship between Emotions and Notes

Another distinct feature of Indian musical theory, the relationship between melodies and emotions like fear, pity, courage and erotic

desire was also postulated in this period. Specific notes were mentioned as capable of arousing specific emotions and a system of their use in melodies was explained. This perception is still made use of in contemporary practice where we see that notes like flat or *komal ṛṣabha* are used to express pathos by composers in film and popular songs. Jogiā and Bhairava are still used as *rāgas* for this purpose.

In ancient times, the analysis of notes and their intervals was facilitated by harps (*vīṇās*). The system of Vedic chants was kept insulated from this musical system of *grāmas* and *jātis* and no interaction was allowed between the two. No Vedic verse would be sung in a secular scale or a non-Vedic text be sung in the Vedic tones. This insulation has been kept till just about a decade ago. The *gandharva* system was used for all the spiritual, ritual, liturgical, theatrical, aesthetic and social needs, and a very wide variety of instruments (strings, pipes, drums and cymbals) were used.

Mutilingual Music

Besides ritual practices music was used widely in ancient Indian theatre, dance and poetic compositions in many languages. Besides Sanskrit, a large number of languages like Pāli, Māgadhī, Avantī, Śaursenī, Tamil and others used for all purposes. A variety of songs (*gītas, prabandhas*) from all over the country is recorded. All ancient string instruments were harp-like, similar to *kiṭhāra*. The zither was also known but used very sparingly. Records show that from second century CE music acquired a central place in the temples and monasteries or the *āśramas* as they were called. It was also highly patronized at the royal courts and the abounding courtesan-houses.

By the sixth century CE, the older system of *grāma-jāti* expanded into the more and more of mixed scales for creating melodies called the *grāma-rāgas*, *bhāṣā-rāgas*, etc. The ancient *jātis* came to be reserved for the more esoteric music. After a few centuries the *rāgas* emerged as the basic scales without the *grāmas* and *mūrcchanā* classifications.

Medieval Transition

With the Turkish invasion of India in the beginning of the twelfth century CE and the establishment of the Islamic governments in most part of the country a major change in the environment of the performing arts was ushered in. As a consequence of the puritanical denunciation of the Islamic clergy music was patronized by the royalty as a deviation. Most of the Indian dancing and its music, which was either temple worship or theatrical repertoire (mostly centring on Hindu myths) had neither any place in the royal courts nor could be funded by the Islamic rulers who were often rabid iconoclasts. The fury of temple destruction that raged for nearly four centuries in most parts of India except the deep south rendered all the arts supported at temple complexes, theatres and courtesan houses homeless. Only the concert repertoire of vocal and instrumental music presentable largely as chamber music could be patronized by those rulers who could afford to disregard the censure of their clergy. This was the genre of music that survived and even flourished and drew performers of other genres. It also came into a major interchange with the musicians from Iran and other Middle Eastern nations. Besides the royal court, the Indian musicians found the many sects (*silsilās*) of sufi saints and their camps (*dargāhs*) sites where music was valued as a legitimate method of worship. But such places being mendicant could provide less material patronage, more of audience. Vernacular songs for ecstatic dancing (*samāh*) and in praise of the prophet and his sayings (*qawwālī*) were cultivated and acquired great popularity which has continued to the present times.

Shift to Devotional Concerns

The Indian musician, once bereft of the theatre and the secular performing spaces which were no longer available to him under the Islamic rule, thus turned in a big way to the Hindu monastic centres (*āśramas*) of saints and mendicants located more often outside towns and villages. For the average Hindu devotee the *āśramas* were

replacements of the great temple complexes as spaces of spiritual, cultural and aesthetic activity. But the music that developed here was largely devotional, hymnical and other-worldly supporting the great flowering of devotional poetry in modern vernaculars. In northern India, earlier vernacular compositions called *prabandhas* were first replaced by new compositions in Brijbhasha Hindi called *dhruvapadas* and later by *khayāls, ṭhumrīs, dādrās*, etc. In the south devotional compositions in many vernaculars also abounded and are now known as *kṛtis, varṇams, pallavīs, jāwālīs*, etc. They are all in praise of the gods like Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, Śiva, Devī, the power of *nāda* (sound as a cosmic principle) and yogic consciousness. This music cultivated in the *āśramas* was also patronized at the royal courts, both Islamic and Hindu.

Major Change in the Musical Grammar

Around the fourteenth century CE, a major shift occurred in the musical grammar of India. The *grāma-mūrcchanā* system which provided for shifting of the tonic from one note to another (a sort of a plagal system) was abandoned to evolve a new system which came to be called the *melas* in which the tonic was fixed on the first note of the septet, the *sā*. Instead of allowing the modification in the position of all seven notes as in the earlier system, now five notes were added to the septet, that is flat *ri*, sharp *gā*, sharp *mā*, flat *dhā* and sharp *nī* to make a series of twelve notes. *Sā* and *pā*, at a consonance of fifth, were made unchanging notes. This is first stated by Locana in his *Rāgatarańgiṇī* (*c.* fifteenth century CE). The development of the fretted zithers and the impact of the Persian *maqām* system is said to be the major cause of this change. The *mela* system is called *thāṭ* in northern India.

The famous musicologist of the twentieth century Acarya Brhaspati has argued that the *melas* were conceived under the direct impact of the Persian *maqām* system in which twelve notes called *rast, sahnavāz, doka, kurd, sika, girka, hijāz, nava, hisār, husainī, aganu* and *nimamahur* were recognized as the basic intervals of an octave.

It is not very certain if the twelve intervals were supposed to be exactly equal as is the case with tempered scale on the pianoforte today. None the less, it is quite obvious that the Arabic-Persian system was primarily different from the ancient Indian system in the respect that it never shifted the tonic from a particular note, i.e. *rast*. The *mela* system also had the primary *maqām*-like characteristic of an immovable tonic on *sā*. It also acquired five more notes and gave them new names by prefixing *komala* (flat) and *tīvra* (sharp) adjectives to the traditional seven notes. This system after being formulated by Locana was first stated in the south Indian musicological treatise on the *mela* system called *Svaramelakalānidhi* (*c.* sixteenth century CE) composed by Rāmāmātya. He uses terms like *cyuta* and *sādhāraṇa* for flat and sharp variations of the seven notes. It is, therefore, quite logical to deduce that the *mela* system was a tailoring of the ancient *mūrcchanā* system to follow the principles of the *maqām* grammar.

It has been argued by many that the *mela* scales were an indigenous development, most probably poineered at Vijayanagar by Vidyāraṇya. The theory of its nurturing by *maqām*s, let alone its genesis under their influence, has been resented. It has been pleaded that the abandoning of the transpositional tonic and the inclusion of denominations of note-positions like *komal ṛṣabha* and *cyuta pañcama* to increase the total number of notes in an octave to twelve from the traditional seven, was necessitated by a big change in the nature of musical instruments, particularly the strings. The transition that occurred was the phasing out of the harp-like *vīṇā* by the universal usage of the zither-like *vīṇā* on which immovable frets were fixed to denote notes. As the players got accustomed to associating particular frets with particular notes, it is argued, the renaming of the same frets for different notes, a necessity in the *mūrcchanā* system, became difficult. The players, therefore, opted for the simpler system that of *mela* in which the notes and the fret could maintain an unchanging relationship. But this does not seem to be a very plausible reason. In the earlier Indian system, the same

strings were given new names of notes each time a *mūrcchanā* was changed. Now that frets had replaced the strings, players trained in renaming could have renamed the frets as they renamed the strings. The impact of *maqāms*, hence, seems a more plausible reason for the creation of *melas*. This resulted in a certain amount of tempering in many *rāgas*, which was perhaps later attempted to be remedied by inventing movable frets as on *sitār* and *surbhahār*.

Growth of Dhruvapada and Other Forms

Around the same time, the Indian music came to acquire some diverse and distinctive characteristics along the geographic division of the north and the south. In the north for classical music most lyrics were composed in Brijbhasha Hindi and in the south in Telugu. Differences in stylistic renderings, names of the *rāgas*, and beats, use of instruments and nature of embellishments and methods of training and modes of performance also contributed to give them different identities in spite of a common base. Northern music (also called Hindustani) still concentrates on the expansion of the melodic structure through *ālāpanā* and improvisation, progression of rhythm from slow to fast and the work of the lead performer. Its compositions are also on erotic themes, descriptive of seasonal and natural beauty besides being hymnical. Southern music (also called Carnatic music) has reduced *ālāpanā*, preserved better the lyrical composition, centres on the middle beat and emphasizes group work and rhythmic variety. The content of all its lyrics is nearly always religious. Mālakauṅs, Toḍī, Kalyāṇa, Jaijaivantī, Bihāg, Pīlū are some of the popular Hindustani *rāgas* and Kalyāṇī, Hindolam, Sauvirī, Malayamarutam, Bhūpa are some of the Carnatic ones.

Present State

The variety of music performed in the length and breadth of the Indian nation is still staggeringly large. From the thousands of years old chanting of the Sanskrit *mantras* of the four Vedas, to the latest film hits, there are tribal and ritual songs of marriage, birth, naming,

clothing, bathing, leaving home, death, etc. in 28 languages and 600 dialects across the subcontinent. The traditions of Hindustani and Carnatic are moving closer in a healthy interchange. After the independence of India from British occupation in 1947, for three decades classical music was a major source of encouraging national pride at home and abroad.

In spite of its very archaic features Indian music has adapted with ease to the modern technical innovations from the microphone to the microchip without altering any of its content adversely. The technological revolution actually helped its spread within India and over the world to influence the music of many nations. The process of notating and printing the lyrics, so far handed down only orally, began early in the early twentieth century. This was followed by taking the folk and classical performer to the modern concert hall and the radio. Artists were recorded for the gramophone as early as in the West. Indian film industry, which also found its feet very early, consolidated the immense variety of music from all parts of India and transmitted it to the global listener. Through films, it is a major influence on the countries like Iran, Iraq, Turkey, the Gulf and states of Central Asia. In spite of the emergence of global pop, it has succeeded in maintaining its very distinct identity and independence from Western music. Its classical performers have taken it alive to all corners of the world and it abounds increasingly in private collections.

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6

Origin of Rasa
A Philosophical Appraisal

Subhash Phogat

The oldest available text on dramaturgy in India is *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata Muni, probably written between 400 BCE and 200 BCE. It is an encyclopaedic work of 6,000 *sūtras* incorporated in 36 (37) chapters; it deals with all aspects of performing arts, acting, dance, sentiments, theatre, poetry, music, rituals, etc. Kashmir Śaiva philosopher Abhinavagupta (mid of tenth and early eleventh century) is the most authoritative commentator on it, he refers Kohal according to whom there are eleven parts of *nāṭya*, which are *rasa*, *bhāva*, *abhinaya*, *dharmī*, *vṛtti*, *pravṛtti*, *siddhi*, *svara*, *ātodya*, *gāna* and *raṅga*. Among all the constituent parts of *nāṭya* Bharata Muni attaches highest importance to *rasa*, and declares that there no meaning is possible in drama without *rasa*: *na hi rasād ṛte kaścidarthaḥ pravartate*।[1] *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata Muni is the first classic text to enumerate and illustrate the different kinds of *rasas* systematically. But Bharata acknowledges the authority of Saint Druhiṇa who told that *rasas* are eight in number: *ete hyaṣṭau rasāḥ proktā druhiṇena mahātmanā*.[2] Bharata Muni classifies these eight *rasas* into two categories as basic and dependent, or primary and

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[1] Abhinavagupta, *Abhinavabhāratī*, tr. Nagendra (Hindī *Abhinavabhāratī*), Delhi: Delhi University, 1960, p. 441 (hereafter AG).

[2] Ibid. VI.16, p. 433.

secondary. For him Śṛṅgāra, Raudra, Vīra and Bībhatsa are the basic *rasas* which cause the Hāsya, Karuṇa, Adbhuta and Bhayānaka *rasas*. Hāsya is produced from Śṛṅgāra; actually imitation of Śṛṅgāra is Hāsya. Everyone is well aware that clowns cause laughter only by imitating the ways of dressing, walking, postures, talking, etc. of others. Karuṇa is produced from Raudra, i.e. Karuṇa is the product of Raudra. Abhinavagupta[3] elaborates saying that the effect of Raudra, i.e. killing, etc. is Karuṇa. Anger causes harm, pain and grief; and these result in pathetic. Adbhuta is produced from Vīra. Abhinavagupta tells us that due to Vīra Rasa the *kīrti*, *yaśa*, *pratāpa*, etc. of great men flourish in all directions causing wonder. Great deeds of bravery leave everyone in wonder hence Adbhuta is taken to be produced from Vīra Rasa. Bībhatsa is cause of Bhayānaka, actually the effect of Bībhatsa object or seeing of such object is called Bhayānaka. The result of the sight of hideous creatures with strange noise, seeing battlefield covered with dead bodies, while crows, vultures, wolves, dogs, etc. tearing flesh, etc. is obviously frightening.

It seems that initially only four *rasas* were acknowledged and the other *rasas* were accepted only later when it was found that they are also very extensive and permanent.

> An emotion is recognized as *rasa* if it is sufficiently permanent major instinct of man, if it is capable of being developed and delineated to its climax with its attendant and accessory feelings and if there are men of that temperament to feel imaginative emotional sympathy at the presentation of that *rasa*. Thus are Śṛṅgāra and the other seven *rasas*.[4]

Raghavan clarifies the reason for acceptance of Bhayānaka, Adbhuta, Bībhatsa, etc. as *rasas* against Śānta:

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[3] Abhinavagupta, *Abhinavabhāratī*, tr. Nagendra (Hindī *Abhinavabhāratī*), Delhi: Delhi University, 1960, VI.32-33, pp. 517-29.

[4] V. Raghavan, 1940, *Number of Rasas*, Madras, p. 17 (hereafter NOR).

> The reason for the aceptance of Bhayānaka, Adbhuta, Bībhatsa, etc. as *rasas* is that humanity is more liable to these than to Śama, hearts attuned to which must necessarily be very small in number. Śama is almost impossible.[5]

So the initial number of *rasa* accepted was four and from these four the number increased in the due course of development.

In *Agni Purāṇa*[6] one finds a beautiful and interesting illustration of the origin and development of *rasa*. It traces the origin of *rasa* in *Para-Brahman* (the Ultimate Reality)

akṣaraṁ paramaṁ brahma sanātanamajaṁ vibhum।
vedānteṣu vadantyekaṁ caitanyaṁ jyotirīśvaram॥

ānandaḥ sahajastasya vyajyate sa kadācana।
vyaktiḥ sā tasya caitanyacamatkārarasāhvayā॥

ādyastasya vikāro yaḥ so 'haṁkāra iti smṛtaḥ।
tato 'bhimānastatredaṁ samāptaṁ bhuvanatrayaṁ॥

abhimānadratiḥ sā ca paripoṣamupeyuṣī।
vyabhicāryyādisāmānyāt śṛṅgāra iti gīyate॥

tadbhedāḥ kāmamitare hāsyādyā apayanekśaḥ।
svasvasthādiviśeṣottha parighoṣasvalakṣaṇāḥ॥

sattvādiguṇasantānājjāyante paramātmanḥ।
rāgādbhavati śṛṅgāro raudrastaikṣṇāt prajāyate॥

viro 'vaṣṭambhajaḥ saṁkocabhūrvībhatsa iṣyate।
śṛṅgārājjāyate hāso raudrāttu karuṇo rasaḥ॥

vīrāccādbhutaniṣpattiḥ syādvībhatsādbhayānakaḥ।
śṛṅgārahasyakaruṇā raudravīrabhayānakāḥ॥

vībhathādbhutaśāntākhyāḥ svabhāvāccaturo rasāḥ।
lakṣmīriva vinā tyāgānna vāṇī bhāti nīrasā॥

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[5] V. Raghavan, 1940, *Number of Rasas*, Madras, p. 20.

[6] *Agni Purana*,chap. CCCXXXIX Śṛṅgārādirasanirupaṇam 1-9.

"The Supreme *Brahman* is imperishable, eternal, unborn and omnipresent. Vedānta describes Him as non-dual, consciousness, God and light. The bliss is natural in Him. He expresses Himself only rarely. This expression is of the nature of Consciousness, *camatkāra* (wonder) and *rasa*." So *rasa* is nothing but the expression of the blissful Ultimate Reality. Since bliss can be enjoyed only by the sense of ego or personality, therefore without the sense of ego there can be no personal existence. Hence "the first modification in the Ultimate Reality is that of (ego). From this proceeds *abhimāna* (attachment), which overflows the three worlds". *Abhimāna* is a kind of diversion (extension), which brings forth duality, and due to duality (multiplicity) only there can be attachment. "From *abhimāna* is produced Rati which becomes Śṛṅgāra Rasa on being nourished by *vyabhicāribhāva,* etc. Probably Hāsya, etc. all *rasa*s are varieties of Śṛṅgāra only. These *rasa*s are different owing to the difference in their causes environment and attributes, hence permanent moods." Śṛṅgāra is such a powerful sentiment that it immerses the person in an enjoyment which cuts him from the rest of the world. So when some disturbance is caused in this enjoyment by whatsoever reason, it becomes intensified (*tīkṣṇa*) thus Raudra (Rasa) is manifested. The *sthāyibhāva* of Raudra is *krodha* (anger), which is closely related to *garva* (proud). Due to pride, attachment is enthusiastic to face the disturbance, hence Vīra Rasa gets manifested. While facing the disturbance if attachment generates hate due to any reason, either for itself or the cause of disturbance then it gets compressed (*saṁkocana*); thence Bībhatsa Rasa is manifested. The origin of these four basic *rasa*s has roots in the different attributes of the Ultimate Reality. Since attributes (*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*) are the foundation of the creation of the God hence *rasa*s are created from the attributes of the Lord. Śṛṅgāra proceeds from *rāga* (attachment) which is a product of *rajas*, Raudra has its root in intensity which represents Śṛṅgāra, Vīra is caused by *avastambha* thus it represents *sattva* and Bībhatsa is produced from *saṁkocana* (contraction) which is caused by Śṛṅgāra itself.

Agni Purāṇa takes these four: Śṛṅgāra, Raudra, Vīra and Bībhatsa as primary (*svabhāvaśca*) and other as secondary, which proceed from these four. Hāsya is produced from Śṛṅgāra, Karuṇa from Raudra, Adbhuta from Vīra, and Bhayānaka from Bībhatsa. *Agni Purāṇa* also mentions Śānta Rasa, though without any reference. It enumerates *sthāyibhāvas* as eight: *rati, hāsa, śoka, vismaya, krodha, utsāha, bhaya* and *jugupsā*.

Thus *Agni Purāṇa* shows that all *rasas* are varieties of Śṛṅgāra, i.e. Śṛṅgāra is the original *rasa* from which all other *rasas* have developed. Hence *Agni Purāṇa* declares that Śṛṅgāra is the dominant (*mūla*) *rasa*. Similarly, though Bharata numbers *rasa* as eight and classifies them into basic and dependent, while emphasizing the importance of *rasa*, he worthily declares that there cannot be any meaning (in *nāṭya*) without *rasa*: *na hi rasād ṛte kaścidarthe pravartate*।[7] Abhinavagupta tells that here Bharata uses the word *rasa* as singular (*ekavacana*) meaning thereby that *rasa* is but one. Abhinavagupta names this singular *rasa* as *mahā rasa*. He believes that this *mahā rasa* is perceived as various *rasas* due to the difference of *vibhāva* (causes), etc.; and it can be proved by Sphoṭavāda, Anvitābhidhānavāda and Abhihitānvyavāda.[8] For Abhinavagupta this *mahā rasa* is Śānta Rasa, since Bharata says that "from the Śānta Rasa only all other *rasas* are produced due to their respective particular causes" and "the *rati*, etc. *sthāyibhāvas* of Śṛṅgāra, etc. all other *rasas* are modifications (*vikāra*) whereas Śānta Rasa is the basic form (*prakṛti*). Modifications (i.e. other *rasas*) are generated from the base (Śānta Rasa) and eventually merge in it. Emotions are generated from the basic Śānta owing to their particular causes and when these causes cease to exist the emotions also merge into Śānta Rasa."[9]

bhāvā vikārā ratyādyāḥ śāntastu prakṛtirmataḥ।
vikāraḥ prakṛtairjātaḥ punastatraiva līyate॥

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[7] AG, op. cit., p. 441.

[8] Ibid., pp. 428-29.

[9] Ibid., p. 610.

svaṁ svaṁ nimittamāsādya śāntad bhāvaḥ pravartate।
punarnimittāpāye ca śānta evopalīyate ॥

Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka is the first person to relate the enjoyment of *rasa* with *druti*, *vistāra* and *vikāsa*, etc. stages of *cit*. While explaining *rasa* he says that this enjoyment consists of qualities of melting (*druti*), pervading (*vistāra*) and expansion (*vikāsa*) of the *cit* due to demotion of *rajas* to the background and *tamas* made lesser effective by the prominence of goodness (*sattvodreka*). It is free from all volitional, psychological and physical activities. It rests on one's own consciousness and is of the nature of bliss and light. It is akin to the mystic experience of *Brahman*.

rajastamo 'nuvedhavaicitryabalāddrutivistāravikāsalakṣaṇena
sattvodrekaprakāśānandamayanijasaṁvidviśrānti lakṣaṇena
parabrahmāsvādasavidhena bhogena paraṁ bhujyate iti।[10]

Dhanañjaya elaborates that when the reader is in *tanmayībhāva* (rapt attention) then arises in his heart bliss, a taste that is called *rasa*, i.e. the enjoyment of bliss of Self is called *rasa*.

svādaḥ kāvyārthasaṁbhedādātmānanda samudbhavaḥ।
vikāsavistārakṣobhavikṣepaiḥ sa caturvidhaḥ॥

Śṛṅgāravīrabībhatsaraudreṣu manasaḥ kramāt।
hāsyādbhutabhayotkarṣakaruṇānāṁ ta eva hi॥

atastajjanyatā teṣāmata evāvadhāraṇam।
śamaprakarṣo 'nirvācyo muditādestadātmatā॥[11]

"This taste is of four kinds or in four stages of *cit*, viz. *vikāsa*, *vistāra*, *kṣobha* and *vikṣepa*. These stages of *cit* are found in Śṛṅgāra, Vīra, Bībhatsa and Raudra *rasas* respectively." Thus the four different kinds of states of *cit* correspond to the four primary *rasas* given by Bharata. They are also found in Hāsya, Adbhuta, Bhayānaka and

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[10] AG, op. cit., p. 465.

[11] Dhanañjaya, *Daśarūpaka* IV.43-45, Nirnaya Sagar Press, Bombay edn, 1941.

Karuṇa Rasa. Thus in Śṛṅgāra and Hāsya there is *vikāsa*, in Vīra and Adbhuta there is *vistāra*, in Bībhatsa and Bhayānaka there is *kṣobha* and in Raudra and Karuṇa there is *vikṣepa*. The four secondary *rasas* are produced from the four primary *rasas* because they share these states of *cit*. Hence Hāsya, Adbhuta, Bhayānaka and Karuṇa Rasa are produced from Śṛṅgāra, Vīra, Bībhatsa and Raudra Rasa respectively. Hence there are only eight *rasas*.

Dhanika comments that this taste is found in all *rasas* in general form, but since different *rasas* have different *vibhāvas* owing to this difference there are found different types of states of *cit* in the *sahṛdaya*. In Śṛṅgāra Rasa there is *vikāsa* of *cit*, in Vīra Rasa there is *vistāra*, in Bībhatsa there is *kṣobha* and in Raudra there is *vikṣepa*. Different from these four *rasas*, the Hāsya, Adbhuta, Bhayānaka and Karuṇa Rasa also have these stages of *cit* in them; though they are nourished from their own respective *vibhāvas*. Owing to this similarity Śṛṅgāra etc. are taken to be the cause of Hāsya, etc. Hence Bharata Muni notes that from Śṛṅgāra is produced Hāsya, from Raudra is produced Karuṇa, from Vīra is produced Adbhuta and from Bībhatsa is produced Bhayānaka Rasa. Instead of cause and effect Dhanika prefers to use terms *hetu* and *hetumān* because Hāsya, etc. are produced from different *vibhāvas* and Śṛṅgāra etc. are produced from different *vibhāvas*. There are only these four stages of *cit* and the number of *rasa* is eight; each stage of *cit* is related to two *rasas*. Dhanañjaya rejects *rasa* status to Śānta, since the state of *cit* in Śānta is incorporated in these four stages only.

V. Raghavan notes that

> the *Daśarūpaka* holds that Śṛṅgāra and Hāsya are *vikāsa*; Vīra and Adbhuta, *vistāra*; Bībhatsa and Bhayānaka, *kṣobha*; and Raudra and Karuṇa, *vikṣepa*. Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka and Abhinavagupta have given only three mental states *druti*, *vistāra* and *vikāsa*. Śṛṅgāra and Hāsya are *vikāsa*; Vīra and Adbhuta are *vistāra*; and in these two cases the equation is justified. But *bhaya* is not the same as Bībhatsa. Raudra is not *vikṣepa* but is *dīpti*, similar to the *vistāra* of Adbhuta. Karuṇa is similar to *vipralambha* Śṛṅgāra as

Ānandavardhana says and is the height of *druti*. Therefore the justification or the explanation of the scheme of four primary *rasas* producing four other *rasas* on the basis of the respective identity of the mental states of those *rasas* does not seem to be correct.

Criticizing this scheme of four primary mental states responsible for four primary and four secondary *rasas*, which is given as an argument by somebody for proving the existence of eight *rasas*, Bhaṭṭa Nṛsiṁha, commentator of Bhoja's S.K.Ā. (Mad. MS) says that the states of mind cannot be four; for, *vikāsa* and *vistāra* are identical, as also *vikṣobha* and *vikṣepa*. Hence there can be only two primary states. He however does not accept two, but gives only one state, called *rasa* or *svāda*.[12]

Criticism of the Theory of "Four Primary Rasas Causing the Four Secondary Rasas"

Bharata Muni grouped the eight *rasas* in two categories, primary *rasa* and secondary *rasa*. The four primary *rasas* produce the four secondary *rasas*. From Śṛṅgāra Hāsya; from Raudra, Karuṇa; from Vīra, Adbhuta and from Bībhatsa, Bhayānaka is produced. In this Śṛṅgāra *anukaraṇa*, acts of *raudratā*, warrior's deeds of valour and Bībhatsa scenes are cited as examples to illustrate the process. After mentioning this in *Śṛṅgāra Prakāśa* Bhoja analyses it critically to modify it. Accordingly the four basic *rasas* cannot be held as cause for the four secondary *rasas*; as experience violates this rule. Hāsya is produced not only from Śṛṅgāra but from others also. Bhoja accepts Bharata's point that Hāsya is produced from imitation of Śṛṅgāra; but this is not all. He further adds that one cannot restrict production of laughter to the imitiation of Śṛṅgāra only, since the same is caused by imitation of other *rasas*, e.g. Vīra Rasa, also.

athocyate "Śṛṅgāranukṛtiryeha sa hāsyo rasa iṣyate" ||
tarhi "vīrasyānukṛtiryeha so 'pi hāsya itīṣyatām" ||[13]

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[12] V. Raghavan, 1963, *Bhoja's Śṛṅgāra Prakāśa*, vol. II, p. 426.

[13] Ibid., p. 380.

Similarly, there are instances where Karuṇa is produced from Raudra. But neither all the instances of Raudra cause Karuṇa nor Karuṇa is the sole *rasa* produced from Raudra. There are more chances of Bhayānaka being produced from Raudra than from Bībhatsa. Thus we find that instead of discarding Bharata's theory, Bhoja accepts it with modification.

Bhoja is not the first aesthetician to accept the modified version of Bharata. Abhinavagupta has elaborately explained Bharata's views with illustrations. He shows that Hāsya is produced by *śṛṅgārābhāsa* but it is also caused by all other *rasābhāsa* like *karuṇābhāsa*. He mentions that the production of one *rasa* from other can occur through any of four kinds of causations:

teṣāṁ rasānāmutpattau hetavaḥ sūcakāścatvāraḥ।
rasānāmutpādyotpādakaprakāro yāvān sambhavati
scturbhireva sūcita iti yāvat॥[14]

1. Any *rasa* can be produced from other *rasa* by *tadābhāsa* or *tadanukāra* (imitation), e.g. imitation of Śṛṅgāra results into Hāsya Rasa. The *ratyābhāsa* in Rāvaṇa cannot produce Śṛṅgāra Rasa but only Hāsya Rasa. Similarly *śāntābhāsa* also culminates into Hāsya Rasa.
2. Some *rasa*s are produced after the result of other *rasa* (*yadīya phalānantaram*), e.g. Raudra Rasa. Result of Raudra is capturing, killing, etc. which necessarily produce the Karuṇa Rasa. He cited example of grief-ridden Duryodhana, in whom Karuṇa Rasa was produced when he thought about facing his parents with the bad news of Duḥśāsana's death at the hands of Bhīma. Abhinavagupta further mentions that Raudra is followed by Bhayānaka as a rule and Karuṇa Rasa follows Śṛṅgāra as a rule.
3. Third form of causation is that in which one *rasa* is intent (*pravṛtta*) and takes other *rasa* as aim (*phala*). He illustrates

[14] AG, op. cit., commentary on Kārikā 32 of chap. VI, p. 518.

with an example of Vīra Rasa: The *utsāha* (*sthāyibhāva* of Vīra Rasa) of the great men is intent (*pravṛtta*) with the aim to surprise (*vismita*) the world, e.g. in Sītā's *svayaṁvara* when Rāma broke Śiva's bow then it created such a great sound which did not become quiet for a long time. This was very surprising. Thus Adbhuta Rasa is produced from Vīra Rasa.

4. Fourth kind of causation is that in which due to the *vibhāva* being common, one *rasa* imposes (*ākṣepa*) on the other *rasa*, e.g. Bībhatsa Rasa. The blood, etc. *vibhāva* of Bībhatsa Rasa are *vibhāva* of Bhayānaka Rasa also. Abhinavagupta quotes a *śloka* from *Veṇīsaṁhāra* in support. It says that Bhīma massaged the blood of Duḥśāsana on his body, which was left after drinking of it by him. Seeing this form of Bhīma the enemy army was terrified and started running from battle-field.

Thus Abhinavagupta shows that Bharata's scheme needs to be further developed. Since the emotions are quite closely related, he shows the necessity of development of Bharata's view in the light of interrelation of emotions. There can be no one rule or any other hard and fast criterion between two *rasa*s. One *rasa* becomes *bhāva* for one *rasa* in one circumstance and for other *rasa* in another circumstance. Śṛṅgāra produces Hāsya, it also produces Karuṇa though Vipralambha. Similarly it gives rise to Vīra and Adbhuta Rasa also. Though Raudra produces Karuṇa, as mentioned above Karuṇa is caused by others also. Similarly Vīra equally results into production of Adbhuta Rasa and Bhayānaka Rasa. Śṛṅgāra Rasa is taken as primary (self-produced) by Bharata Muni and also *Agni Purāṇa*. Abhinavagupta shows that even Śṛṅgāra is caused by other *rasa*s. Laughter of heroin evoked by the Hāsya of clown produces Śṛṅgāra Rasa in the hero. Similarly Vīra also produces Śṛṅgāra as is found in the stories of warriors, princes and heroes e.g. Draupadī's *svayaṁvara*. Thus Bharata has not given any waterproof compartmentized theory regarding the relation between emotions. His views should be taken as an inspiration and be further developed as a full-fledged theory.

7

Ontological Analysis of Nāṭya

Sonal Nimbkar and *Navjyoti Singh*

Introduction

Kṛti is understood as our real world, while *anukṛti* is recreating this world again. *Nāṭya* is said to be *anukṛti* and not *kṛti*. Recreating has been subject of debate for almost two millennia. What would recreating mean as the created world exist prior to it? What is the stuff *anukṛti* is made of? And why do we need recreation? In this paper we attempt to understand the ontology of recreation.

In a world where a human being gropes with pain, misery, happiness, success, failure, etc. it is a general tendency to shun misery and seek happiness. The need to look for happiness paved the way for *anukṛti* as it is immersive in nature. It takes one away from the harsh and mundane realities of everyday life. *Anukṛti* is that reality whose stuff is not made entirely from the stuff of reality. It adorns a new imaginary form. What are the elements of *anukṛti*? What are those elements without which *nāṭya* are not possible?

Ontology of Entities in Drama/Movie

Every *nāṭya* consists of *nāyaka-nāyikā, kathāvastu, rasa, laya, abhinaya,* spectator and *rasa-niṣpatti*. Without elements like them a *nāṭya* is not possible. So these can be said to be some of the elements of *nāṭya*.

KATHĀVASTU (NARRATIVE)

Kathāvastu is a sketch of a human's heroic endeavour and a play

of destiny. It is also known as *vastu, kathānaka, carita, tivṛtta,* etc. a formal structure where there is potential for *bhāva* to culminate into *rasa*. It is a roadmap on which the character walks. It is a narrative, storyline which gives rise to a full-blown entity, *nāṭaka*. It deals with past, present and future. It renders itself in time. It is considered to be the body of *nāṭya*.[1] It resides in the realm of trans-temporality, a realm where ideas are stacked and can be picked and chosen to form an interesting narrative. This *kathāvastu* is embedded with two types of narration, one which is dominant and the other which is supporting the dominant one, *ādhikārika* and *prāsaṅgika* respectively.

Ādhikārika is a storyline which is a story of the lead character (*nāyaka*). The story leads to *phalonmukha* and thus to the culmination into *rasa*. It is in this story that we see destiny plays its role, a life full of ups and downs, e.g. story of Udayana in *Ratnāvalī*.

Prāsaṅgika is a story which supports the main *ādhikārika*. This story does not lead to *phalonmukha* but helps to reach *phalonmukha*. It can be present throughout the main story or can be brief like Śabarī's.

Another example would be from *Nāṭīkā Ratnāvalī* when Udayana's minister Yaugandharāyaṇa fakes the scene of Udayana's wife Vāsavadattā being burnt in a fire and spreads the rumours of her death because king of Śrī Laṅkā, Ratnāvalī's father denies Udayana's proposal for his daughter on the basis of he being already married.

This *kathāvastu* has various phases of progression, it spreads and evolves itself in such a way that it passes through three stages known as *arthaprakṛti, avasthās* and *sandhis*. They help to tighten the plot and make it exciting.

Arthaprakṛti is how dramatist/author would envision a story. This story reaches its peak through various stages. These various stages given in *Nāṭyaśāstra* are five, namely, *bīja* (seed), *bindu*/

[1] *Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharatamuni*, ed. and tr. Manmohan Ghosh, XXI.1, Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 2002.

(spread/drop), *patākā* (chain of episodes), *prakarī* (particular incident) and *kārya* (action). These are various stages of the progression of the story.

As *arthaprakṛtis* are the various stages of the story or dramatist's/author's mind. *Avasthās* are the five different stages of the *netā*'s (actor) endeavour. They are: *ārambha* (beginning), *prayatna* (effort), *prāptyāśā* (possibility of attainment), *niyatāptī* (certainty of attainment), *phalāgama* (attainment of the object). With the help of an actor the script becomes *nāṭya*.

The combination of *kāryāvasthās* and *arthaprakṛti* is *sandhi*. The joint, or seam between the two, a point where both meet for the purpose of the attainment/fulfilment. When the actor makes an effort on a given plot, five *sandhis* are created. These five *sandhis* are *mukha, pratimukha, garbha, vimarśa/avamarśa, nirvahaṇa/upsaṁśṛti*.

NETĀ/NĀYAKA/NĀYIKĀ (CHARACTERS)

This word has come from the root *ni*, which means to move towards. He takes the *kathāvastu* to the audience, *phalāgama*. *Nāyaka* is always at the centre of the story. That is why he is *a nāyaka* or *netā*. According to Śāradātanaya, a character is needed in a play so that the *rasa* can be transported to the spectator's (*sāmājika*) mind (*antaḥkaraṇa*). *Netā* is the *dvitīyabhedakatattva* of *rūpaka*. Here *netā* does not necessarily mean only *nāyaka*; it includes all the other characters also. *Nāyaka* is a complete man (*sarvaguṇasampanna*) as we see in films today. *Nāyikā* is the life of the *nāṭaka*.

Nāyaka-nāyikā take the story on their shoulders and bring it to its fruition. Character is the entity who responds to the situations and surroundings and carries emotions (*bhāva*) through *āṅgikavācikas* and *āhārya*. She is a tool of expression.

RASA

That which is relished is *rasa*. It is experienced by a *rasika*. It is said that just as well-disposed persons while eating food cooked with many kinds of spice, enjoy its taste and attain pleasure and

satisfaction, so the cultured people taste the durable psychological state (*sthāyibhāva*) with words, gestures and the *sattva*.[2]

The combination of *vibhāva, anubhāva* and *sañcārī* is *rasa*. Without this no poetic meaning proceeds. As it is famously said:

tatra vibhāvanubhāvavyabhicārīsaṁyogātrasaniṣpatti[3]

Rasa is produced from the combination of *vibhāva* (determinants), *anubhāva* (consequents) and *vyabhicāribhāva* (complementary psychological states). The *saṁyoga* mentioned in the *sūtra* is not the combination of *vibhāva, anubhāva* or *vyabhicāribhāva* among themselves, but it refers to their combination or union with the *sthāyibhāva*, which has not been mentioned in the dialogue that follows it. It is practically admitted on all hands that the *rasa* is realized when a *sthāyibhāva* is brought to a reliable condition through the three elements, viz. the *vibhāva, anubhāva* and *vyabhicāribhāva*, those elements which respectively excite, follow and strengthen the *sthāyibhāva*. *Rasa* is called so because it is capable of being tasted. When *sthāyibhāva* like *rati* (love), *bhaya* (fear), etc. are combined with various *bhāvas* they become *rasas*.

ABHINAYA

Abhinaya is also derived from the root *ni* hence that which is carried forward to the audience is *abhinaya*. Here, the meaning of the *kathāvastu* which is carried forward to the audience is known as *abhinaya*. This *abhinaya* is conveyed in four different manners, *āṅgika, vācika, sāttvika* and *āhārya*, i.e. movements, words or song, facial expression and costume respectively.

LAYA

Laya derived from root *lī* (to cling)[4] means "to melt" or "to dissolve"

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[2] *Nāṭyaśāstra* VI.31-36.

[3] *Nāṭyaśāstra* VI.31.

[4] *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Monier Williams, p. 868, London: Oxford University Press.

or "a union". *Laya* is related to time, like a *sūtra* (thread) that binds the beads and gives direction to *āṅgika, vācika, sāttvika*, music and *kathāvastu*. Thus the common cardinal point for dance, song and instrumental music/rhythm is *laya*.

SPECTATOR

Spectator, also known as *sahṛdaya rasika* is the one in front of whom the platter full of emotions, drama is presented. The one who watches a spectacle is a spectator. Abhinavagupta says that every individual has *saṁskāras* (latent impressions) that are there with us from this birth and the previous birth. We carry these *saṁskāras* from one birth to another and so on and so forth. We also understand them as *vāsanās*. In the course of this wandering we have had every kind of experience. We experience each and every emotion that situation offers us or introduces us. And we all possess each and every one of the nine *sthāyibhāvas*.

When the *sahṛdayas*, the sensitive and sympathetic spectators, watch the play, on the basis of previous *saṁskāras*, understand the particular *sthāyibhāva* of *anukārya*, say Rāma, the hero in the play. As they continue to watch the play same *sthāyibhāva* is awakened in them. When a spectator analyses this play, he understands the *abhinaya* through his *ahaṁkāra* (ego). At that time he forgets his own pain and pleasure and feels the pain and pleasure of the play as his own. At this time it can be said that the spectator is in the state of *rasatva*. When the spectator feels one with the emotion, identifies with the current emotion, forgets all her emotions, sufferings and mundane routine and aligns with the flow or the dominant mood, we can say that the immersion has taken place. And the pleasure which one gets with this identification can be said as *rasa-niṣpatti*.

RASA-NIṢPATTI

Rasa-niṣpatti can be understood as that distilled pleasure which a spectator relishes when the *kathāvastu* reaches its *phalāgama*. *sthāyibhāva* culminates in *rasa* with the help of *vibhāvādis*.

Debates on the Fundamental Relations

Many *gurus* have given the commentary on *Rasasūtra* of Bharata Muni according to their perspective.

Many scholars have also given their views on *Rasasūtra*. The four prominent exponents are Bhaṭṭa Lollaṭa, Śrīśaṅkuka, Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka and Abhinavagupta. All these scholars differed from one another because of their different interpretations of the keywords *saṁyoga* and *niṣpatti*. By *niṣpatti* they mean *utpatti* (production, generation), *anumiti* (inference), *bhukti* (aesthetic enjoyment) and *vyakti* (manifestation, suggestion) respectively.

The term *saṁyoga* means union, union of *vibhāva, anubhāva* and *sañcāribhāva* that culminates into *rasa*. So while understanding the word *saṁyoga* relation between *vibhāvādi*s and *rasa* is understood. By *saṁyoga* they mean, *utpādya-utpādakabhāva, jñāpya-jñāpakabhāva, bhojya-bhojakabhāva* and *vyaṅgya-vyañjakabhāva* respectively. That is to say:

1. The *rasa* is what is produced and the *vibhāvādi*s are the causes that produce *rasa*.
2. The *rasa* is what is inferred and the *vibhāvādi*s are the characteristic signs.
3. The *rasa* is what is to be enjoyed and the *vibhāvādi*s are the ingredients for enjoyment.
4. The *rasa* is what is to be suggested and the *vibhāvādi*s are the factors which convey the suggested meaning.

Let us have a look at Bhaṭṭa Lollaṭa's theory of *rasa*. Bhaṭa Lollaṭa was a Mīmāṁsaka and Abhidhāvādī exponent. He considered *abhidhā* as the tool of poetry. He interpreted *niṣpatti* in the denotational sense and interpreted it as a causal origination. He has given commentary as per Utpattivāda. *Rasa* is the effect and the *vibhāvādi*s are the causes for it. In Bhaṭṭa Lollaṭa's view, that which is known as permanent emotion (*sthāyibhāva*) in its undeveloped form becomes intensified through its union with the *vibhāvādi*s and becomes

rasa located in the character that is being portrayed (*anukārya*). According to him, *rasa* is not in the actor or spectator but is in the original historical characters like Rāma and Duṣyanta. The actor feels himself as the represented historical personage during the duration of the enactment but remembers his real nature through the faculty of *anusandhāna* (recollection).

This view has its drawback, as later commentators felt that it is faulty to not view *rasa* in the spectators, if they did not experience it, then how did they relish it; as according to Bharata Muni, *rasa* is *āsvādyate*[5] — that which is relished.

Śaṅkuka, another Kashmiri and a younger contemporary of Bhaṭṭa Lollaṭa, does not accept the theory of Lollaṭa and gives his own theory of Anumitivāda. Śaṅkuka's opinion is known as Anukaraṇavāda or Anumitivāda.

Śaṅkuka approaches the problem of how the spectator relishes *rasa* (aesthetic experience) from the point of view of a logician, Naiyāyika, which he actually was. Abhinavagupta has mentioned about Śaṅkuka in *Abhinavabhāratī*, his commentary on *Nāṭyaśāstra*. From this we come to know that he had also written on Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra*, but his work is now lost. He puts *saṁyogāt* as *jñāpya-jñāpakabhāva* and *niṣpatti* as *anumiti*. According to him, *rasa* is *anumeya*, *vibhāva-anubhāva*, etc. are the tools of *rasānumiti* and *sahṛdaya* (audience) is *anumitikartā*. *Rasa*, he said, applying syllogistic reasoning, was not produced as an effect as Lollaṭa claimed but could be logically arrived at by the process of inference. Using the analogy of a forest fire he says that just as it can be inferred from the smoke rising from above the top of a cluster of trees, in the same manner the basic mental state can be inferred from the situation presented by the stimuli, etc.

If we further try to understand the location of *rasa* then he elucidates that *rasa* is located in the actor (*anukartā*). He further elaborates his view by saying that *rasa* is the reproduction or re-

[5] *Nāṭyaśāstra* VI.31.

enactment of the permanent emotion of the character, say Rāma. And because it is the reproduction it is called by different name: *rasa*. This reproduced mood is inferred as existing in the actor. In other words, according to Śaṅkuka the *rasa* is located in the actor only.

This view also seems faulty as it is a known fact that *rasa* is experienced through *pratyakṣa pramāṇa*. Thus rejecting it through direct perception and accepting it through inference seems flawed.

Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka was a great aesthetic thinker who lived in the late ninth century Kashmir. His theory is based on the theory of Sāṁkhya Darśana. He explains the meaning of the term *saṁyoga* as *bhojya-bhojakabhāva* and the meaning of the term *niṣpatti* as *bhukti*. Spectator enjoys the *rasa*. His work *Hṛdayadarpaṇa* too does not exist now but we come to know about him as Abhinavagupta mentions him in his work, *Abhinavabhāratī*.

He rejects the idea that *rasa* or the aesthetic emotion can be affected or inferred, and tries to extend the Sāṁkhya concept of *bhoga* (enjoyment) to the field of aesthetics. *Rasa*, he posits, is neither *ātmagata* nor *paragata*, nor is it *taṭastha vedya* (*sthāpita*, already there). That is, it cannot be perceived as located in the spectator or as located in anyone else, whether it is the character portrayed or the actor portraying that character. We can have no perception of *rasa* at all: *rasoḥ na pratīyate*[6]! What Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka meant in other words is that the spectator or the reader does not feel the sorrow or the happiness of the character represented personally as his own because of the aesthetic distance.

That is why even a tragic play or a poem does not cause any feeling of pain in him and he is able to "enjoy" or savour its flavour too. Further, he says, ordinary spectator or reader can never identify himself with the extraordinary virtues of such a great hero

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[6] *Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharatamuni*, commentary by Abhinavagupta, 1996, ed. and tr. Parasnath Dwivedi, p. 52, Varanasi: Sampurnanand Sanskrit University.

as Rāma. What happens actually is that he enjoys the aesthetic emotion through the *bhojaka-bhojya* relationship. That is, through the relationship of the enjoyer and the enjoyed. Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka, thus, stresses the importance of *bhāvanā vyāpāra* or imagination, which, according to him, comes into play as an aspect of aesthetic experience. Poetic experience, he maintains, has another power besides *abhidhā* (denotational power) which enables the *sahṛdaya* (aesthetically sensible person) to see the characters presented in an aesthetic creation in a generalized way, "independently of any relationship with his ordinary life or the life of the actor or the hero of the play or poem", as Gnoli puts it. This special power Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka calls *bhāvakatva*, the power of generalization. The protagonists in their generalized character are perceived to rise above their "specific contextual reference". Thus Rāma's love for Sītā though particular becomes the universalized experience of love in general. Even pain is transfigured into a sort of pleasure which can be savoured aesthetically. This universalization of the aesthetic object and subject through the power of *bhāvakatva* frees them from all limitations of individuality and is called *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*. The concept of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* or universality of the aesthetic experience is Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka's greatest contribution in the field of aesthetic thought.

To explain the relation between the subject and the object, Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka posits another power or function of language — that of *bhojakatva* (enjoyment). It is by the virtue of this power, according to him, that we relish the experience presented in a poetic creation, not at the practical but at the aesthetic level. All practical considerations fade away due to the predominance of *sattva* or innate goodness of human nature, a state of psychological poise which makes us repose in our own consciousness. The other two potentialities described in the Sāṁkhya philosophy — *rajas* (physical dynamism) and *tamas* (insensibility) — are rendered ineffective. Thus the *bhoga* (enjoyment) of *rasa* is a process of delectation very much akin to the state of self-sufficient blissful consciousness which

one experiences on realizing the Supreme Reality (*Brahman*). Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka's another important contribution, therefore, is that he brings the aesthetic experience at par with mystic experience. By stressing that it is not determined by practical considerations but is a state of being, he makes it more internal and contemplative, bringing the relisher face to face with the ultimate Universal Reality. In his comment on Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka's formulation about universalization of experience in aesthetics, Abhinavagupta does not seem inclined to dismiss it altogether. In fact, he absorbs his core contentions into his own aesthetic theory and develops them in accordance with his own monistic outlook.

Abhinavagupta established the theory of Abhivyaktivāda. According to him the meaning of the term *saṁyoga* given by Bharata Muni is *vyaṅgya-vyañjakabhāva* and meaning of *niṣpatti* is *abhivyakti*. He says *rasa* is non-worldly (*alaukika*) beyond the structure of space and time and does not exist in reality (*kṛti*). Abhinavagupta says that *vibhāvādis* are not responsible for the production of *rasa*, hence *rasa* is not the effect and *vibhāvādis* are not its cause because even if the *vibhāvadis* are destroyed, the possibility of the production of *rasa* is still there.

Conclusion

Anukṛti is not just an imitation of what is but a creative transaction of what is. This creative transaction takes place using different materials. For example, while enacting an emotion love between Ratnāvalī and Udayana in the *nāṭīkā*, *Ratnāvalī*, *nāyaka* and *nāyikā* though do not have such feeling for each other are able to enact it as they assume a *vibhāva* in each other. They express this through *āṅgika, vācika, sāttvika* and *āhārya,* i.e. movements, words or song, facial expression and costume in such a way that the emotion "love" is conveyed to the spectator. They pick and choose their movements and songs from various "affordances"[7]

[7] Gibson James, 1986, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

or "I cans"[8] as put by Maxine-Sheets Johnstone to bring out the emotion love.

The movement is not done exactly as the original character would have done it (if it is historical) as the current actors have not seen them but recreate as per their own understanding on the basis of the idea of, say Udayana or Ratnāvalī. This recreation on the basis of one's own understanding and/or imagination can be said as *anukṛti*. Hence reality of drama is played in the mind of artists.

Anukṛti, a creative transaction, is a process where thematic entities *arthaprakṛtis*, *avasthās* and *sandhis* are stitched into a drama. An actor takes the responsibility on his shoulders and takes the seed to its fruition.

This fruition is relished by a spectator. Spectator reaches the height of pleasure, *rasa-niṣpatti* an experience which is equated with *brahmānanda* also. It is an experience which one cannot have in real world, *kṛti*. To relish this experience one has to de-individualize oneself from its own identity. While watching a drama, this de-individualization or *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* happens collectively as there are many spectators. This cluster of people together, *samāja* as Bharata Muni states, enjoys the drama.

Society (*samāja*) is an entity where people from different walks of life come together for a unitary goal, in this particular case, relishing (*āsvādyate*) a *nāṭya*. Spectator can relish a *nāṭya* only when she de-individualizes oneself. Only when an individual is free from all the worries of life, she can enjoy the *rasa* of *nāṭya*. This state can be visualized as *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*, a state where one leaves not only all the worries, responsibilities of life but all one's identity of self. The consciousness of all the people in the *samāja* while watching a play is the same, they identify themselves with that of the character. Hence *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* becomes the basis upon which *samāja* is able to relish the *rasa* of *nāṭya*.

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[8] Maxine, Sheets Johnstone, 1999, *The Primacy of Movement*, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co.

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Part II
Applications

8

The Indian New Wave Cinema
A Methodological "Convergence" Towards a New Cognitive "Divergence"

Deb Kamal Ganguly

There might be a basic disadvantage to discuss about certain kind of Indian cinema, a special section of Indian New Wave, that lacks much viewing access or viewing experience.[1] Before getting into the specific arena, one would like to spend some time in a much needed contextualization process. The term "New Wave", rather "La Nouvelle Vague", in case of cinema, as is known, started in France in late 1950s to early 1960s, pioneered by directors like François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Alain Resnais, Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol. There are disagreements about the exactitude of the form and function of French New Wave — like, whether it is about the "politics of form";[2] up to what extent the signatures of New Wave can be traced back in the films prior to the officially designated

[1] I doubt, whether many readers might have had the opportunity to see any of the films related to our discussion, in a proper celluloid projection in a good cinema hall. I know, makers of these films, Mani Kaul, Kumar Shahani or Kamal Swaroop would have harped that if at all, this kind of discussion can only initiate after a proper cinematic experience. Even seeing the films in other mediated forms, like DVD projection, etc. would be absolutely unacceptable to them as an experience in lieu of celluloid projection.

[2] William Guynn, 1978, "The Political Program of Cahiers du Cinéma, 1969-1977", *Jump Cut*, 17: 32-35.

period of New Wave; its avant-gardist nature. Through a process of culturally differentiated osmosis and as a part of shared post-imperial or post-colonial consciousness, different parts of this cinema-producing planet came up with their assertions and claim to this prestigious intellectual coinage, and their own versions of New Wave. With this flowered New German Cinema, American Independent Cinema, Brazil's Cinema Novo and in India we had Indian New Wave. Like all the different modes of modernities of different places,[3] all these New Waves were also bound to be in variation with each other to a great extent.

In official historiography, Indian New Wave is marked with the emergence of the film *Bhuban Shome* by Mrinal Sen in 1969 but the term is still a confusing one. There is a tendency of Indian film scholars to mark a diverse range of films in terms of politics and approach, made in 1970s and 1980s, mainly sponsored by the state, away from the mainstream modes of production and distribution, by the directors like Mrinal Sen, Basu Chatterjee, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Shyam Benegal and Kumar Shahani and Mani Kaul under the umbrella of Indian New Wave. Even an international seminar at Yale University (February 2010), dedicated to Indian New Wave cinema, maintained the similar fabric.[4] But if we put forward our query for avant-gardism, and if there is any scope to take avant-gardism as a necessary pre-condition for Indian New Wave, then this bigger umbrella can be further differentiated — and possibly only two names from the list would remain there — Kumar Shahani and Mani Kaul. One more name might be added of Kamal Swaroop with his single film *Om Dar-b-dar* (1988), about which the

[3] We may recall here Partha Chatterjee's seminal article "Our Modernity" based on his lecture during a lecture tour in Africa in 1996 organized by "South-South Exchange Programme for Research on the History of Development" (SEPHIS) and "Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA)," published in 1997.

[4] www.yale.edu/filmstudiesprogram/conferences/Indian_New_Wave/Participants.html, viewed on 22.02.2010.

Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema mentions that it holds within "the possibility of an avant-garde".[5] So, it seems, in the construction of Indian film historiography, the notion of avant-gardism and Indian New Wave gets entangled at various junctures. There are other opinions as well — whether the search for the cinematic form in Indian context can be tagged as avant-gardism; though the term "avant-garde" may sound radical and exciting enough; somehow, the cultural attitude of a linear temporality and progress remains embedded within it. In case of so-called Indian "avant-gardism", it can be sensed as an important critical moment of looking back, almost digging into a solidified and naturalized surface of a cultural amnesia caused by the colonialism, excavating cultural and aesthetic notions from pre-colonial India, re-imagining and renegotiating with those in the post-colonial context. That might be the reason, ongoing search is there for a different nomenclature for this "Indian avant-gardism", film scholar Amrit Gangar is keen to the usage of "Cinema of *Prayoga*", a term definitely better suited for the Indian case.[6]

As we have realigned Indian New Wave for our present purpose, we should note that this "avant-gardist" section of Indian New Wave was vehemently criticized by Satyajit Ray, the towering figure of Indian cinema, specially for the Western imagination; a particular

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[5] Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Paul Willemen, 2002, *Encyclopedia of Indian Cinema*, p. 485, New Delhi: Oxford University.

[6] The Sanskrit word *prayoga* refers to application-based practice. See the contribution of Amrit Gangar in the book *Cinema of Prayoga* (2006), edited by Brad Butler and Karen Mirza. The conscious usage of the Sanskrit word may invoke certain search for rootedness and tradition. However, it is not very difficult to imagine some serious debates about the nature of reinvention of the "tradition"; since colonial times reconfiguring a sense of "lost tradition" had serious ramifications on the political being and the national self of emergent "modern" India, decoding of that, has been a favourite academic activity for the post-colonial studies in India.

essay in Ray's book *Our Films Their Films*[7] is a glaring testimony for this. By that time, i.e. early 1970s, comments Ashish Rajadhyaksha, the aesthetic codes practised by Ray, i.e. a romantic, sensitive, sincere rendition of "reality" through the representation codes available within the broad spectrum of realism,[8] had already become in a limited and reductionist way, the nation state's official choice for self-representation, official aesthetic code, within which, the aspiration for a vocabulary of "nation's progress" from the point of view of the modernizing state can be inscribed. For Rajadhyaksha that state aesthetic bias would be evident specially when Ray's cinema is pitched against the search for an epic form[9] in cinema by Ritwik Ghatak. Thus, we may note a strange ambivalence of state regarding the production and projection of this critical part of New Wave. The makers, Kaul, Shahani and Swaroop were students from the only national-level film institute in the country,[10] a state

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[7] Satyajit Ray, 2003 "An Indian New Wave?", in *Our Films Their Films*, Orient Longman, pp. 81-99, Google Books version, accessed 4 October 2010.

[8] Ray's adoption of "life-like quality of cinema" or a very specialized realism is much more complicated than the officially sanctioanble mode of realism in India. Ray's realism was sourced from writers like Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay on one hand and cinema practice of Jean Renoir on other hand. This mode of cine-realism was championed by theorists like Andre Bazin, Siegfried Kracauer, while the official adoption of realism was more close to social-realism.

[9] Ashish Rajadhyaksha, 1982, *Ritwik Ghatak: A Return to the Epic*, Bombay: Screen Unit.

[10] "Film and Television Institute of India" is situated in Pune and started functioning since 1961 as an institute of national importance and fully funded by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India. It was set up in 1961 within the premises of old Prabhat Studio, initiated by V. Shantaram and his partners in early 1930s. Over the years the institute did supply quality technicians to the ever-growing demand in the mainstream film industries in India; at the same time the institute also could create multiple distinct paradigms of original →

project; some of their later independent works were funded by the state — but their films got silently shelved, they were often being criticized for their self-styled stance of esotericism; even in this age of proliferation of DVDs and digital copies over the Internet, very few of their works are legally obtainable so far, the celluloid prints reside in the unaccessible vaults, which are almost like an imperceptible but enigmatic folds between the conscious and the subconscious of the aesthetic attitude of the post-colonial nation state itself.

Let us also generalize for a while the present trends of writings coming out of Indian film studies. There, often films are treated like objectified entities, within which various critical notions related to colonialism, modernity, nation, gender, ideology, etc. get analysed and mapped.[11] So a significant section of scholars of film studies is often busy excavating those signatures. Another set of scholars, from various fields, from psychology to linguistics, is using interdisciplinary methods and frameworks to dig deep into the films coming out of Indian entertainment industry.[12] For reading various genres of Indian mainstream cinema, it is not out of fashion, presently, to take cues from, at times over-deterministic, *rasa* theory. In that context, *rasa* theory has been pitted against Aristotelian catharsis, or similar "East–West" modes

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← thoughts and works in the domain of Indian cinema. The quantity may be negligible if contrasted with the huge outpour of mainstream films from various film industries in India, but the density of thought went beneath these works certainly calls for special attention.

[11] See for example the excellent collection of essays in *Making Meaning in Indian Cinema*, ed. Ravi Vasudevan, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002 or *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction*, ed. M. Madhava Prasad, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000.

[12] See for example *Fingerprinting Popular Culture: The Mythic and the Iconic in Indian Cinema*, ed. Ashis Nandy and Vinay Lal, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007.

of comparison.[13] One may find a grand academic project working at the base level — India's coming of age in terms of a major human-resource player in the world has compelled a part of the Western academia to look for intelligible theories behind the art of overt provocations, self-referential subtle innuendos and majestic seductions, semiotic surplus of mythogenetic narrativity, operated in the "commercial cinema"-powerhouse called India. There are also those writings where Indian cinema is being seen from the nodal point of recent developments in film theory in the West where the critical shift from psychoanalysis and structuralism towards post-structuralism and phenomenology has taken place — we encounter a new series of writing — where the Indian films are being seen as exchanges of gazes, partly ritualized; Indian film-viewing experience of the audience is anthropologically being located within the paradigm of pre-existing dārśanic practices of deities, quasi-religious tableaux performances, iconic representations, etc. All these are important and interesting in their own rights, but not much writing can be found solely being engaged about the phenomenology of the cinematic form; writings hardly can be found where Indian cinema is being treated as an artefact of philosophical inquiry into cognition, like what Gilles Deleuze did for films of Europe, America and to some extent Japan.[14] We may remember, Deleuze as a philosopher got involved seriously into cinema, because he perceived, some of the problems of philosophy

[13] See for example "Rasa Theory and Dharma Theory: From the Home and the World to Bandit Queen", Patrick Colm Hogan, DOI: 10.1080/10509200390118470 or "Rasa and Katharsis: A Comparative Study, Aided by Several Films", Edwin Gerow, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 122(2), Indic and Iranian Studies in Honor of Stanley Insler on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday (April–June 2002).

[14] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, tr. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbera Habberjam, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1989 and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, tr. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.

are akin to the problems of cinema and he wanted to reach to the understanding of some philosophical queries through an unlikely means, i.e. cinema.

Cinema and philosophy, specially Indian aesthetic philosophy, have come together very close in the "avant-gardist" Indian New Wave, in the films of Kumar Shahani and Mani Kaul. The work of Kamal Swaroop also shares a distinct genealogical relation to the pre-existing works of the other two directors. There are certain obvious similarities in the cinematic pre-occupations, common tendencies of spatio-temporal articulations in the works of Kaul and Shahani, which have been grounded in a common critical aesthetic position vis-à-vis renaissance perspectivalism; both of them have articulated that number of times. Renaissance perspective is a visual fallacy based on the perception of human eyes, where parallel lines, if stretched to a great distance, seem to converge at a non-existent vanishing point; objects in the foreground would look bigger than those in the mid-ground and still bigger than those in the background. This visual trope is mostly about the images perceived by external mechanisms of human vision. But the way images carried in consciousness, memory and dream are non-perspectival and not bounded by strict frame margins. For Kaul and Shahani the discovery of renaissance perspective as a painting technique opened a floodgate of interconnected phenomena, which often went beyond the naivety of a seemingly uncomplicated mimetic skill. For them it is the single most important discovery, which altered the course of post-renaissance human existence for ever. We may tell, to avoid the "pornographic seduction of realism", they really have constructed an aesthetic master narrative centring renaissance perspective, almost like a conscious cultural project, based at times on broad generalizations. We may refer to Kaul's actual words from "The Rambling Figure", his lecture delivered in April 1999 at Institut Francais, London, published in *Soundscape: The School of Sound Lectures — 1998–2001*:

> As is well known it is the discovery of perspective that altered the

> world. ... In the beginning it had a brilliant effect upon human relationship with space — it opened up secular dimensions for secular appropriation, an apprehension not known in the medieval and ancient epochs. However, soon after its discovery, it turned into a powerful tool that would alter universal geography. It, for instance, would lead to cartography and make colonization feasible. Colonization would in turn become one monumental aspiration for a universal appropriation of space.
>
> Through an illusion of uniting ground and figure, perspective was able to separate objects in space. By a paradox of realism the foregrounded object found itself floating free of the middle and background though an illusion of a continuous link between the three objects was firmly established. The coming together of these planes as one "reality" (as opposed to the iconic separation of ground and figure) brought with it a whole tradition of visual representation that severed our ties with the tradition and techniques of presentation of a figure. A foreground, a background and a middle ground gave rise to first intimations of true orchestral music making medieval plain chants and polyphonies concise. It changed the narrative of the Italian chronicle that never knew convergence and climax in narrative movements — the new narrative brought with it a single termination to all events. — p. 211

This rather elaborate quote shows how the discourse regarding renaissance perspective got initiated obviously from the visual field but then it was extended to other fields having other sense perceptions. In the later part of the lecture Mani Kaul mentions, how anti-perspectivalist art forms like Indian classical music have been morphed under the aesthetic pressure of renaissance perspective, so that often in classical Indian musical performances in recent times, the musicians strive for a fake sense of climactic end, a convergent narrative closure. In a way the cinemas of Kaul and Shahani have become "political" in terms of cinematic form, where their other colleagues have been dealing with politics in the narrative content of their cinemas.

We may note in case of the works of Kaul and Shahani a process of overlapping cognition in operation from both the aesthetic spheres — camera and cinema are objectified form of optics, again a manifestation of renaissance perspective.[15] How to go beyond the ideology of the tool, while using the tool, became a significant paradigm of aesthetic search for these artists. They studied various oriental aesthetic traditions like miniature painting, classical music forms like *dhrupad, khayāl*,[16] read treaties on art and aesthetics composed in pre-colonial times, just to identify a different sense of aesthetic logic and priority in operation vis-à-vis the art forms where the codes of renaissance perspective have been practised. The question was how to employ the Indian aesthetic notions in cinema, outwardly where perspective logic seem to have produced cinema itself, at least the part of image formation and projection by the cinematic apparatus. The study of various pre-colonial forms, like epic forms or forms which thrive primarily on improvisation and elaboration, hinted towards the possibility of cognition of different order, which would be very different from realist appropriation of image, sound, text. So in their cinema they consciously posited a need for a different cinematic cognition, which would violate the perspectivalist representation and recognition at its base.

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[15] V. Sanil proposes to see cinema as an entity where potentially three different visions do interplay — the perspectival Cartesian vision, the self-reflexive Foucault–Velasquez kind of articulation of vision and existential–phenomenological vision of Merleau Ponty–Cezzane kind. "It is not that all cinema allows itself to be governed by all these three conditions. It sometimes surrenders itself to one or two of these three conditions and continues as if the other does not exist." V. Sanil, 2004, "Why Eyes Are Not Enough?: French Thought and the Lure of the Visible", in *Trajectory of French Thought*, vol. I, p. 107, ed. Franson Manjali, Mary E. John and Sougata Bhaduri, New Delhi: Rupa & Co.

[16] While Kumar Shahani explored the form of *khayāl* in his remarkable cinematic achievement *Khayāl Gatha* (1988), earlier Mani Kaul had made an evocative portraiture of *dhrupad*, in his film *Dhrupad* (1982).

Now we may look closely a part from the film *Duvidha*,[17] made by Mani Kaul in 1973 (Clip 1, see pp. 119-21). It is based on a Rajasthani folk tale, collected and rendered by Vijay Dan Detha. A later film *Paheli* (2002), made by Amol Palekar in mainstream industry, is based on the same folk tale, which I guess, is more familiar and easy to find and see. Though, outwardly the story looks similar in both the films, there are serious differences, most of which are embedded in the differing nature of cognitive requirements.

Some primary observations we can make rather unhesitatingly. Clearly the Rajasthani miniature works as the visual aesthetic ideologue. We also may note time pulses worked through architecture, time which is not "present", not "past" in historiographic sense, but time in a limbo, self-contained and "frozen" in itself. Human characters are almost like a kind of extension of architecture, which is again a complex derivative of space–time, in Bakhtianian sense, chronotope, a chronotope where interplay of the "great" and the "little" tradition, the "classical" and the "folk" act against each other — in Ashish Rajadhyaksha's words: "they apparently contradict, eroticize and freeze each other, both refusing to let the other go beyond apparent specificities and into a form that can develop and adapt to historical change".[18] "Feudalism", in any case, a problematic term for India — feudalism

[17] The section (33.29-40.07) from the film *Duvidha* is chosen where we see the interaction of the bride and the ghost-impersonated-as-husband, mainly their placement and movement in spaces, little dialogue in the form of a confession of the ghost to the bride about his pathetic state without her. We also see some outdoor shots without any characters, the bride on a swing with variable motion, gradually slowing down. The image snapshots are placed sequentially to provide a visual cue for the selected portion of the film. There is at least one image from a shot, at times more than one image are there from a single shot, arranged in a single row, to suggest the change of mise-en-scène elements.

[18] www.filmreference.com/Films-Dr-Ex/Duvidha.html accessed on 14 December 2009.

discussed in history (one may argue well that the discipline of history, based on secular notion of time, itself is perspectivalist in nature), can hardly indicate to this oppressive chronotopic timelessness. Rajadhyaksha also writes:

> *Duvidha*, posed the question with great rigour — and for the first time in the long history of Indian cinema — of what the cinematic form itself was, and what it could do.[19]

He mentions about Kaul's experimentation with "cinematic object", a term coined by Kaul himself. We can refer to a bit of Mani Kaul's writing for his idea of space-time variants, the ingredients for his "cinematic object". He talks about the "encounter" of "meta-space-time", which is subtle and ahistorical, and on the other hand "socio-historical-space-time", which is "solid", "historically determined and therefore moral" to happen in cinema. He says:

> The problem ... is to *solidify* psychological/anthropological ideas of a specific society into spatial/temporal objects.[20]

He writes before:

> The social object is directly situated in society and is significant and complex. It is not to be made significant any more. Rather it requires a break-up, an opening of its inner reasonings.[21]

His understanding of "cinematic object", ultimately leads to a materialization of "space-time", where he says:

> Space-time in broad relations totalizes a structure, without the traditional unity of narrative, its plot and characters. A particular historical time and its correspondences in space, which together project a certain rhythm to the motion of a society and beings,

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[19] www.filmreference.com/Films-Dr-Ex/Duvidha.html accessed on 14 December 2009.

[20] Mani Kaul, 1978, "Towards a Cinematic Object", in *Indian Cinema Super Bazaar*, ed. Aruna Vasudev and Phillippe Lenglet, pp. 126-32, New Delhi: Vikas, accessed from karagarga.net on 8 July 2009.

[21] Ibid., p. 20.

> contain parallel mythical/psychological space linked to a still greater archetypal fixity. Endless permutations are possible.[22]

Question of cognition is important for the sake of cinematic narrative on one hand, on the other, for the emotive directionality — that directionality is indeterminate in nature here. When we talk about the *rasa* in the context of Indian mainstream cinema, somehow we tend to recognize about a foregrounding of a certain kind of emotional experience, which might be overwhelming in nature but at the same time a bit opaque as well. It demands the concentrated performance of the emotive impulse of the audience, a merger of ego and the subject, the self — a Freudian position, if we may say so — we may refer to an article by Lalita Pandit where she mentions about Lacan's subjectivist critique of this Freudian position. In Lacan's theory there is a split between the subject and the ego, which "is similar in many ways to the subjectivism of the pre-modern psychology and linguistics that underlies *dhvani* theory".[23] That might be the reason, why Lacan referred to Abhinavagupta in his writing.[24] In case of Kaul's cinema there is a recognition of the ambivalence of the emotive self, a possible and varying degree of separation between the ego and the subject. Here the indeterminate character of the cinematic moments pushes back the impulsive dominant emotional strain of mind — *rasa* gives pathway to *dhvani*. The portion of the film we have taken for discussion may not be fit for a credible example of Abhinavagupta's Śānta Rasa either. After all below the placid cinematic images, we are always conscious of a tension, be it social, psychological or existential. We need to look out for the idea of *rasa dhvani*, the intrinsic *dhvani* if we want to decode the psychological effect of this kind of cinema. According

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[22] Mani Kaul, 1978, op. cit., p. 20.

[23] Lalita Pandit, 1996, "Dhvani and the 'Full Word': Suggestion and Signification from Abhinavagupta to Jacques Lacan", *College Literature*, Feb.

[24] Jacques Lacan, 1953 (2001), *Écrits: A Selection*, tr. Alan Sheridan, London: Routledge.

to Ānandavardhana the evoker element (*vyañjaka*), while revealing its own form, illuminates something beyond it. If thing beyond is visible, perceivable by sense faculty and/or denotable it is *vastu* or *alaṁkāra dhvani;* when it is only experienceable then it would be *rasa dhvani* or intrinsic *dhvani* as should be the case for this kind of cinema. Ānandavardhana also says:

> The denotable belongs to the space–time order of things, whereas the non-denotable is in time but not of the time–space reality. It is the non-space–time dimension of a space–time reality which contributes to *dhvani.* ... All the factors producing *dhvani* belong to space–time reality and they contribute in such a way that the non-space–time dimension comes into play.[25]

One of the problems of cine-cognition that might happen for general viewers of cinema like us is that we may be tempted to look out for a hidden meaning according to our presupposition of fixity of explanation. We can refer to Ānandavardhana, for him:

> *Rasa dhvani* is not to be confused with a special type of meaning because meaning refers directly or indirectly to the world of sense-perception, that is of space and time. Even the world of emotions is accessible to the language of sense perception and so emotions can be denoted, though not as directly as an object of space and time ... *rasa dhvani* refers more to the atmosphere, the mood, the climate which is created by a special usage of the language of sense-perception.[26]

Let us refer to another film by Mani Kaul, *Siddheshwari*, supposedly a documentary, produced by Films Division in 1989 (Clip 2, see pp. 122-25). Again we have the grid of frames before us as a visual referent of the part of the film. Every single row denotes a shot

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[25] Ananda Amaladass, S.J., 1984, *Philosophical Implications of Dhvani: Experience of Symbol Language in Indian Aesthetics*, ed. Gerhard Oberhammer, Publications of the De Nobili Research Library, Institute for Indology, University of Vienna, p. 90.

[26] Ibid., p. 100.

and multiple images in a row denote the change of mise-en-scène elements in the shot. If we take into consideration the present section, dealing with the myth of *gandharvas*,[27] primarily we may notice the elements like human bodies, actions (at time becomes gestures in stasis),[28] spaces of Varanasi, *ghāṭs*, boat, water — an interplay — like the interplay of *vistāra* (elaboration) of specific tones in a *rāga* rendition in Indian classical musical tradition. Also we might have felt the hint of a myth from *Mahābhārata*, we may not be exactly sure about the narrative course of the myth completely.

Among these two issues, let us talk about the second one first, which is easier. The question of base information and their respective cognition can be interesting in case of *Siddheshwari*. In the beginning of the film, there shows up a fairly long scrolling text, where the central themes of progression of the film are written on the screen in Hindi and English. One may presume this as a negotiation that the filmmaker had to do with the producer, Films Division. Other than this, the producers might have thought, not many of the viewers would be able to get or decode the basic core of information below the flowering of "suggestion" — like the

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[27] Clip 2: The section (7:02-14:06) from the film *Siddheshwari* (1989) is chosen, where after a dynamization of various elements and characters placed in the cultural space of Varanasi, the myth of *gandharva* from *Mahābhārata* is rendered in a tangential way, there the seemingly "present time" Varanasi and the two characters shown earlier (situated in the "present time") become the container and the embodiment of that myth.

[28] Rajadhyaksha talks about a shot of gestural stasis, a person holding a prepared *banārasī pāna*, above his open mouth, being a still life. He indicates this shot as a key to get into the cinematic discourse of Mani Kaul in *Siddheshwari*. See, Rajadhyaksha, 2009, "Mani Kaul and the 'Cinematic Object': Uski Roti and the Rulebook of Cinema", in *Indian Cinema in the Time of Celluloid: From Bollywood to Emergency*, pp. 319-51, New Delhi: Tulika Books.

piece of myth of *gandharva*, which we have taken into account.[29] The audience who might have the knowledge of the myth may react very differently. For them the whole narrative details and pretext of the myth would not be necessary for the cognitive closure of appropriating the narrative of the myth.

Thus often in these films we may notice a kind of tension on the part of the filmmaker about the transparency of the information, how much information is to be revealed so that the bits of information can perform the job of evocation, so that imbibing a suggestive quality. If every bit of details is spelt, then there is an assumption that it would be more denotative and literally cognizable on the very moment of the audio-visual utterance. So one may be prompted to say that the inherent tendency of these films is to be situated culturally within an audience, already informed, both at the cognitive level, and at the level of necessary cultural ambience and anecdotes. So, somehow the democratization of information sharing, which is within the core ethics of modernist Western knowledge system, is resisted here through the formal articulation. Moreover, the obvious question of *adhikāra* (right) of the potential *sahṛdaya* (empathizer), repeatedly mentioned in the treaties of *Nāṭyaśāstra*, comes into play. But the "violence", if at all, of this non-democratic attitude may not be that violent actually, if we shift our locus from the Western grounding – after all the filmmaker may not have attended at all to the "full" understanding and decoding in the Western sense, because he has started his activity from the basic premises that he is dealing with parts and there is a notion of imagined "full" always beyond the limits of the screen-space. It also is indicative of the idea that universality of cognition of cinematic image is at the most a kind

[29] The possibility of the average kind of ready recognition has been further removed by the actualization of a kind of suggestive elliptical off-screen and rarely on-screen dialogue delivery, which may actually provoke the audience to reflect about the suggestive presence of a fragment of myth.

of "humanist" utopia, rather cinematic image is more associated with heterotopia[30] of space-time, specific cultural attitude. If at all following Ānandavardhana's postulation, a universalist stand to be taken, then it may be: "the experience of *rasa dhvani* is universal and one can be trained to experience it and one can rise to the level of *shṛdaya* to perceive *dhvani* at work".[31]

Now about the first issue, a musical structure of "floating or multiperspective", as is the case with Indian classical music, has been employed to treat the visual elements. For that we need to remember that Kaul has searched for the unified theory which can explain the phenomena of cognition and perception in diverse fields of pre-colonial Indian art practices, be it music, painting or architecture.[32] He quotes on one hand from the thirteenth century text on music *Saṅgīta Samayasāra* by Pārśvadeva to talk about *śruti;* on other hand takes cue from *Dhvanyāloka*, Ānandavardhana's ninth-century formulations on *dhvani*. For him there exist some basic notions in all these theorizations —·there is an invariant property (like the basic drone of the *tānapūrā* in a classical music performance as the present invariant and the *āroha-avaroha*, that is, specific ascending and descending notes of a specific *rāga* as a conceptual/cognitive invariant, or the literal meaning or the *avidhā* of a text, or the imaginary grid of horizontal and vertical lines in Mughal miniatures), and on other hand variation or elaboration from the "invariants" (the vocal or instrumental rendition of a *rāga*, or the suggestion, evocation of literal meaning, or the depicted lines — diagonal, serpentine, triangular, etc. varying from those horizontal and vertical lines in miniatures). He recognizes the invariants as

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[30] We may invoke Foucault here. In the lecture "Of Other Spaces", he talks about the notion of "heterotopia" as an entity composed of rational spatial coordinates and the collective imagination about the space.

[31] Amaladass, 1984, op. cit., p. 102.

[32] Mani Kaul, 1991, "Seen from Nowhere", in *Concepts of Space: Ancient and Modern*, pp. 415-28, New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts/Abhinav Publications.

emotionally opaque. For him, *dhvani* or *śruti* or *dṛṣṭi* happens at the varying intervals between the invariants and the elaborations. These intervals again resonate against imagined totality of the sound space for music, meaning universe for poetry and visual space for painting. That resonance is more about absence than the presence. He picks up *anupalabdhi*, the cognition and perception by absence, the last of the sixfold methods of perception told in various paths of Indian philosophy. He goes on to refer and develop on the philosophy and aesthetics of "absence" again borrowing from Indian tradition of cognition — *prāgabhāva* — the absence before the appearance of the object, *pradhvaṁsābhāva* — the absence as the object gets splintered and *atyantābhāva* — as the object perishes. These notions of absences[33] are again plotted against three functional modes of mind, told in texts like *Yogavāsiṣṭha* — *jāgrat* (state of awakening), *svapna* (dream state) and *suṣupti* (state of deep sleep).

Thus, the question of the "other" nature of cognition is important for Indian New Wave, beacause our dominant mode of acculturation with cinematic images has oriented us in a certain way to deal with the suggestion, starting from the base level, i.e. the literal cognition of images, or *avidhā* of image-understanding, visual–semantic relation. Within that framework of preparedness of mind, to deal with the cinematic images, our conscious cognitive attitude, i.e. the alertness to read the details, the story, the character, the actions are challenged from the very beginning — because in Indian New Wave, we find the ripples and waves of suggestion often starting from the very beginning, often the conscious sections of our minds, if uninitiated, put their switch

[33] It is likely that Mani Ḳaul has borrowed these three ideas of absences from the Vaiśeṣika tradition of Indian philosophical system. The other notion of "absence", i.e. *anyonyābhāva* (reciprocal absence) is treated by Mani Kaul as a basic attribute of real existence of an object, as it is present in a definite spatio-temporal coordinate, it is therefore absent elsewhere. It seems that he finds the notion of *anyonyābhāva* to be too generalized a notion for any specific creative use in cinematic forms.

off after a certain amount of time, while they become clueless and numb, their cognitive apparatus fail to process the stream of perceptions within a pre-assumed framework, they are unable to process suggestion any more. So, for Indian New Wave, as like some avant-gardist cinema in the West, e.g. silent "cine-poems" by Man Ray in the 1920s, the cognitive priority and orientation of the audience need to be differently located.

We would end our discussion with a close look from a segment of Kamal Swaroop's *Om Dar-b-dar* (1988), where we may find another trajectory of this aesthetic discourse. In the segment of the "Heaven's descent in Pushkar" we may find several elements at work, like: An adolescent boy, Om, keeps himself under the water of one of the "holy" tanks of Pushkar, it is being planned that he would emerge every night at 12, to create an effect of holy *darśana*; it is being announced from public address system that the "Heaven" has descended in Pushkar and various shots of Pushkar fair, the affair of divine descent is juxtaposed with Jawaharlal Nehru's file shots as inaugarating a dam, etc. we see villagers and foreigners moving around in the fair ground; advertisement banner attached to a camel; a video journalist follows Om's movement and Om is being seduced to bring up from the water a brand of toothpaste as it is intended by a group of local businessmen; the "significance" of that "divine" item is being asked to a naked *sādhu*; a new kind of non-cooperation movement, why the "Heaven" should not stay in Pushkar throughout the year; Om is again asked to bring *rāma-rājya*, but instead he brings a fish ring as the next "divine" item, etc. Moreover, there are shots of neon signs, images seen through a small glass-like crystal, various unexpected kind of graphic and sonic montages, wall clock, sudden flurry of shots of shorter length in between longer shots.

The film is situated in Pushkar. Pushkar, already having mythical space identity, has been represented here as a space where density of time is articulated through layers of competing myths, both pre-modern and modern in nature. A collage or even

cacophony of myths of various time dimensions and magnitudes at times acting against the sensual perception. The historicity and the contexts of the myths have been consciously coagulated. One may remember that sensuality of perception is quite important in the films of Kaul and Shahani. In terms of comparison to *śruti* — we may tell the string is being pulled to such an extent that the string tears down, the elaboration collapses — that utterly non-musical sound of tearing away of the string has also been included here to expand the *śruti*, beyond its scope, almost to the form of jazz.[34]

Again a different kind of challenge to standardized cinematic cognition is operating here — the film is made of identifiable cultural artefacts, often from the popular domain, decontextualized to a great degree, the nature of free association of the mythic objects, the so-called "sacred" and "profane" signifiers alter the standard notion of the fixity of the substratum of the signifieds, almost in a way Fredric Jameson sketches the character of video as a post-modern form.[35] We may call this film as a cinematic appropriation of the form of video.

Coming back to the aspect of convergence and divergence — we may note that Indian traditions in the pre-colonial past generally used to leave space both for convergence and elaboration. At times it allowed a central semiotic to be differentiated and to create different disciplines, at times insights from different disciplines got converged to create and support a core idea. One of the great examples of convergence might be Abhinavagupta, the great tenth-

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[34] Mani Kaul talks about the possibility of elaboration to such an extent where the sensual quality of the perception of the art object can be seriously affected. He provides examples such as Picasso's later cubist works or the musical forms like jazz, where the elaboration of variants from the invariants can be found of that order. See "Seen from Nowhere", 1991, p. 32.

[35] Fredric Jameson, 1991, "Video: Surrealism without the Unconscious", *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

century scholar, whose elaboration of *dhvani* aesthetics finally had helped him in his resolution for religio-philosophical project[36] of Kashmir school Śaiva Tantra. This Kashmir school of thought, though monistic in nature, had significant differences from the monism of Śaṅkara. Another example of convergence might be borrowing of Abhinavagupta by Lacan,[37] where the spiritual content has been drained off to highlight the aspect of the psychology of the reflexivity of the self. The theoretical position of the Indian New Wave shows convergence and divergence of various nature. On one hand the convergence of art forms as renditions of unique aesthetic philosophy has been assumed, separately both for the cases of the East and the West; on other hand the ideological tool of cinema as a material, i.e. renaissance perspective, has been challenged through a proposition of a range of divergent possibility of cinematic cognition and perception.

One last point can be mentioned briefly — it is about secularization of tradition. Indian religious traditions based on epistemology of philosophical positions vis-à-vis world and existence often prioritized a heightened cognition — the altered mode of cognition is at the base of any spiritual process or mystic experience. Often aesthetics is a part of that religio-philosophical system. So, if "secularization" of aesthetic principles has happened through Indian New Wave cinema, how much it is justified — a legitimate question to ask. In response it can be mentioned, the secularization might have happened in terms of signifiers of the spiritual, but in case of form, the altered mode of cognition has been placed at the centre of the proceeding, which might help much more to get into the philosophical discourse than the mimetic act of the outward symbols through a rhetoric which is unable to provide any deeper understanding of the aesthetic systems, we have inherited.

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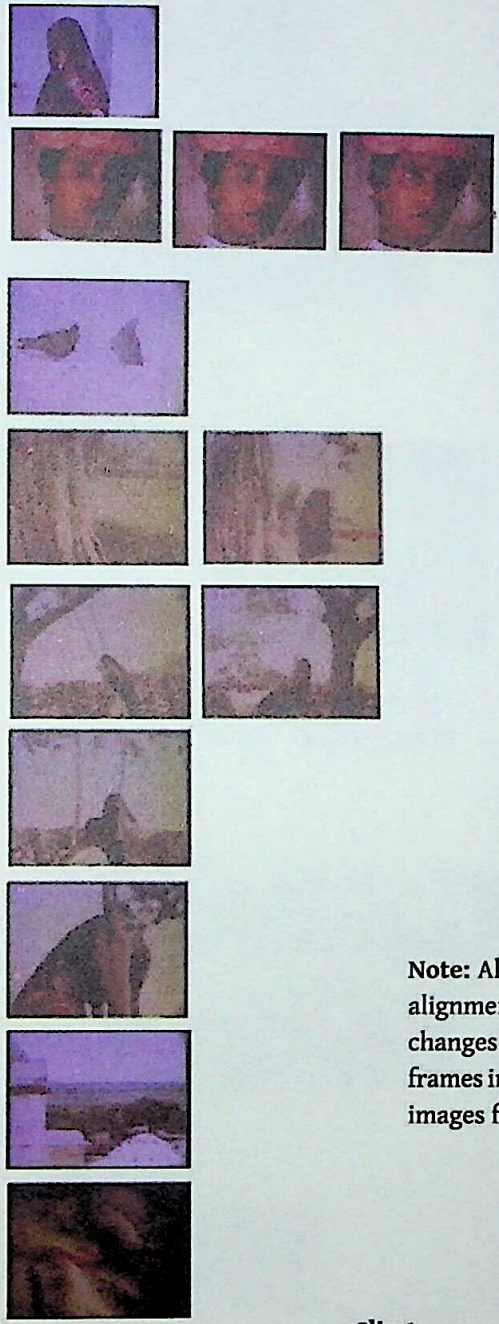
[36] Gerald James Larson, 1976, "The Aesthetic (Rasasvada) and the Religious (Brahmasvada) in Abhinavagupta's Kashmir Saivism", *Philosophy East and West*, 26(4): 371-87.

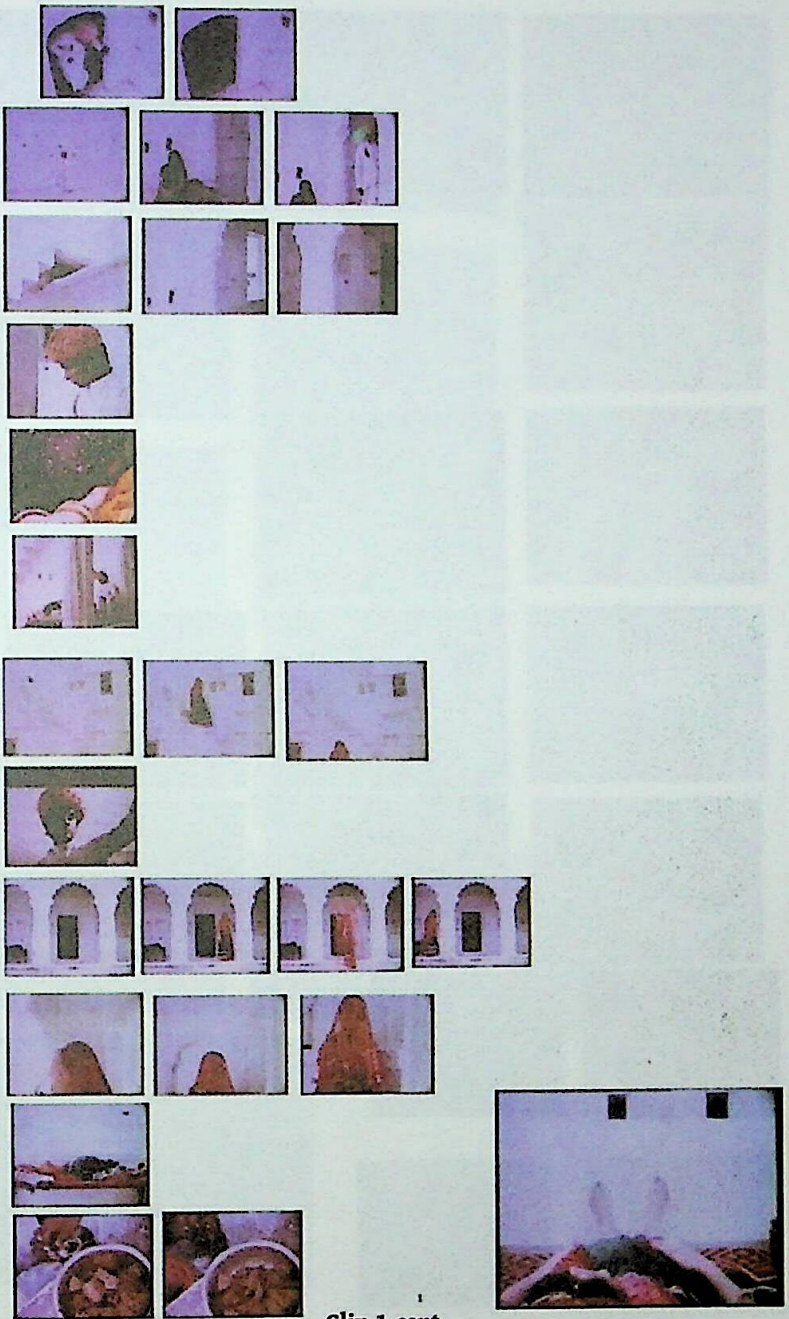
[37] Jacques Lacan, 1953 (2001), op. cit., p. 24.



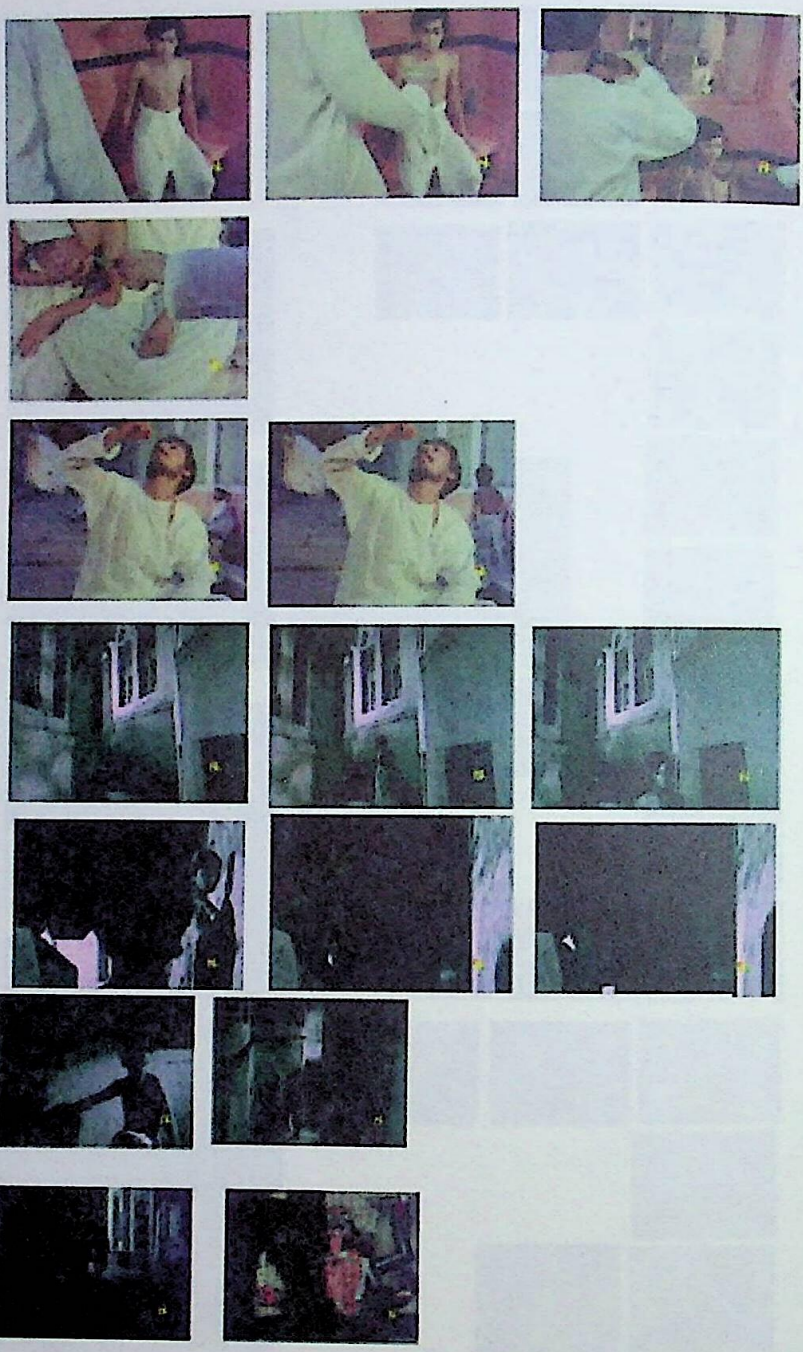
Note: All the frames in horizontal alignment show the compositional changes in a single shot, while the frames in vertical alignment shows images from successive shots.

Clip 1

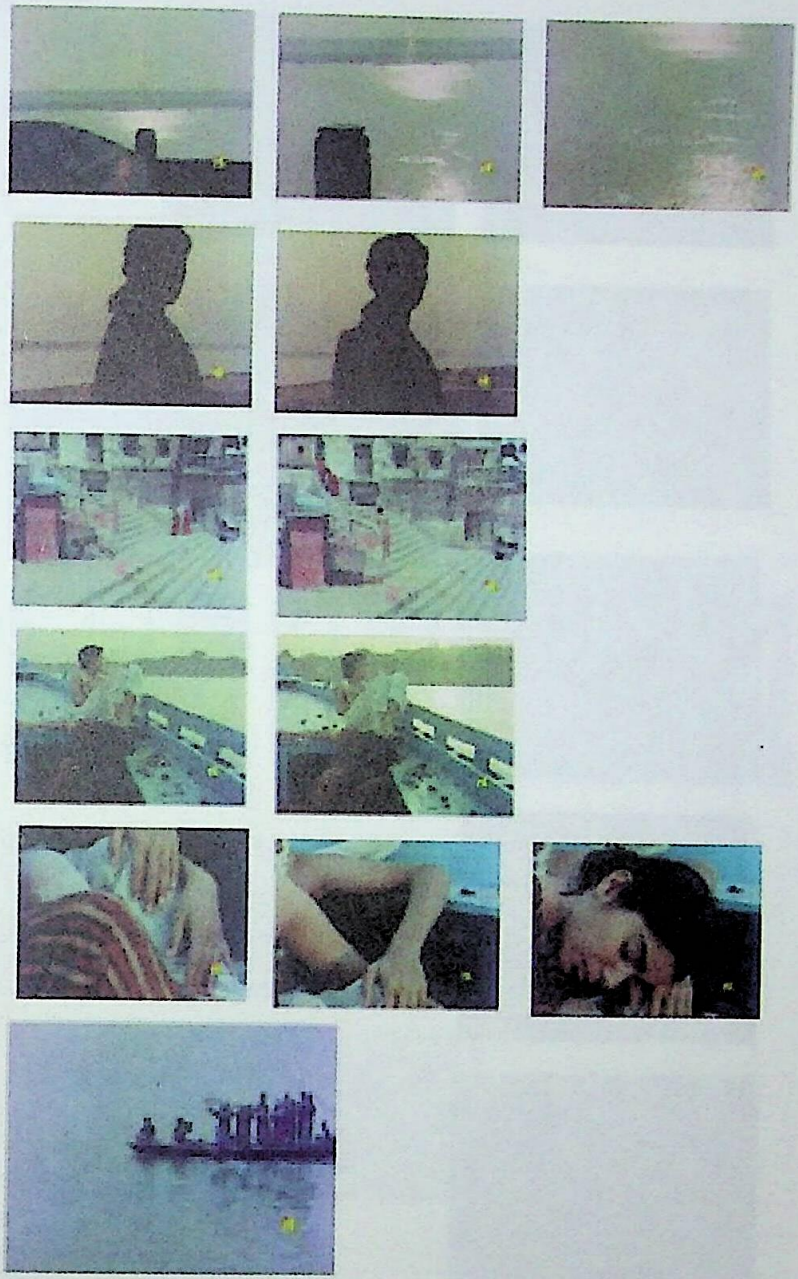
Clip 1 *cont.*



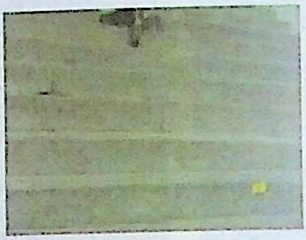
Clip 1 *cont.*



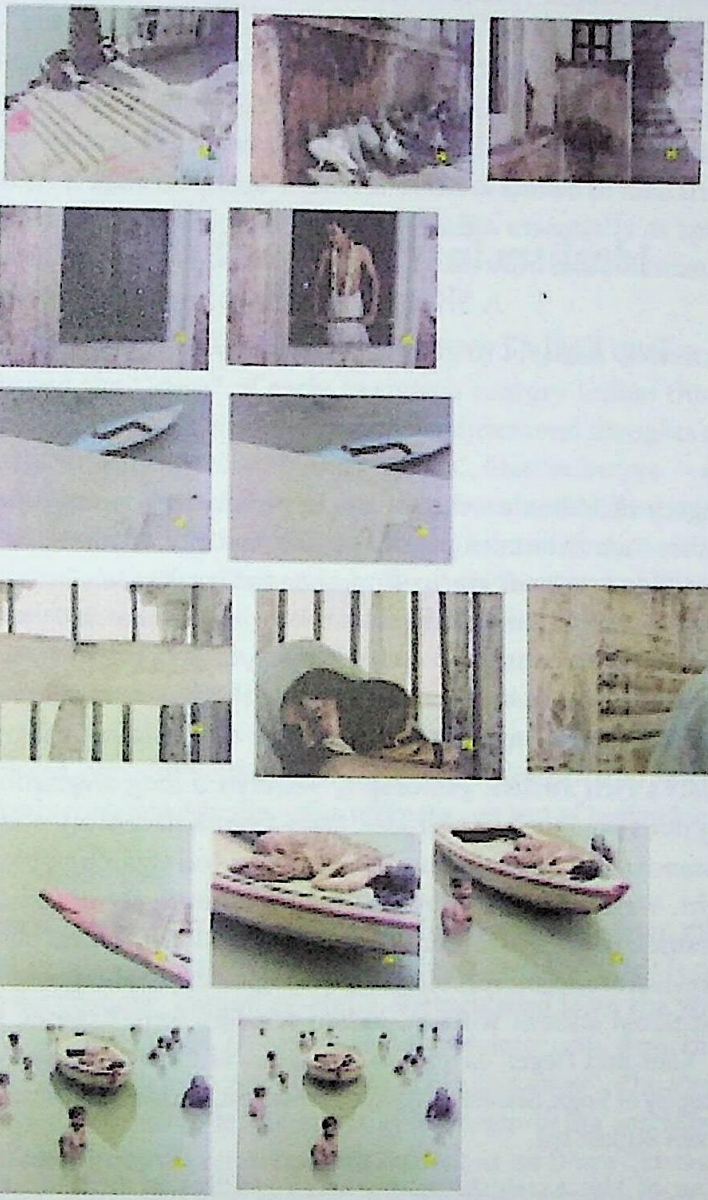
Clip 2



Clip 2 *cont.*



Clip 2 *cont.*



Clip 2 *cont.*

9

Idealism in Indian Aesthetics
A Short Note on Two Early Twentieth Century Thinkers

Joydeep Dutta

The legacy of Indian aesthetics has been relatively sparse and sporadic. Two thousand years ago, we had the "fifth Veda", Bharata Muni's *Nāṭyaśāstra*, a comprehensive treatise on Sanskrit dramaturgy that originated the *rasa* theory. More than 1,000 years ago, we had Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta, who propagated poetics and the idea of *dhvani*. Then what? What was happening, say, a hundred years ago?

India's rich ancient philosophy suffered a long stagnation chiefly due to political vicissitudes. Early twentieth century was a renaissance and all-round reawakening — a revival of philosophical thought. Western philosophy was taught extensively in Indian universities; hence the contemporary Indian philosophy was not a mere revival of ancient speculation, but a logical rational expression of traditional ancient wisdom. Indian scholars were exposed to Plato, Kant and Hegel; as well as the classical Indian systems of philosophy of Yoga, Sāṁkhya, Nyāya, Mīmāṁsā, Vedānta, Vaiśeṣika, and even Buddhism.

One of the earliest comparative studies of Indian and Western thought systems was done by Sir Brajendranath Seal, who assimilated a powerful synthetic philosophy of an idealistic character. Ancient Indian systems are varied and divergent —

monistic, realistic, materialistic, dualistic, atheistic, nihilistic — but the dominant undercurrent has been the idealistic non-dualistic system of Advaita (Vedānta). The Western terminology that is a best-fit would be Idealism. Idealism is the philosophical theory that the ultimate nature of reality is based on mind or ideas. It maintains that whatever exists is known to man through and as ideas — the world or reality exists essentially as spirit or consciousness; that abstractions and laws are more fundamental in reality that sensory things.

In the field of aesthetics, this Indian Idealism (Advaita) has shaped the "ideas" of early twentieth century Indian thinkers. This paper delves into the art–aesthetic ideas and thoughts of two such thinkers — Sri Aurobindo and K.C. Bhattacharyya — whose writings were not just mere commentaries of established aesthetic theories, but could be credited with seminal contributions in Indian art and aesthetics. These two brilliant thinkers and philosophers lived and wrote at about the same time, though there is no ready evidence whether they actually met or interacted, or whether they read each other's works. They were both brilliant scholars of English, Sanskrit, Indian and Western philosophy. And they both echoed very similar thoughts regarding Indian art and aesthetics, firmly rooted in Advaita — the ultimate concept of Indian Idealism.

Sri Aurobindo

The life of Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950) was a journey from militant nationalism to *yoga* mysticism. The Concept of Evolution is central to his thought, though carefully distinguished from the Western Darwinian concept. He said, man has not descended from the ape, but "has risen from matter through life and mind". The Vedāntic view of evolution is the spirit or *Brahman* being *saccidānanda*, which Aurobindo rendered into English as *sat* (Pure-Existent), *cit* (Consciousness-Force) and *ānanda* (Delight of Existence). Out of this eternal trinity is born Evolution, as effected by what Aurobindo calls the Super-Mind. This Super-Mind mediates between the Divinity

(*Brahman*) and the World (Mind–Life–Matter).

For Sri Aurobindo, art is an interpretation, not creation. Everything is actually "only manifested". Man is the psychic instrument through whom God manifests that what He has previously arranged for Himself. Art is special since it interprets not just the past and present manifestations, but also imagines and expresses future manifestations. Art interprets at three levels — the causal part (thing-in-itself), the psychical part (passing imagination and emotion) and the physical part (external appearance or incident). Aurobindo suggests that Indian art is concerned more with the first two parts, while European art is more concerned with the latter two. The Indian artist perceives the thing-in-itself by his soul-sight (*sūkṣma dṛṣṭi*) or by the spiritual union with the object studied (*dhyāna*). The truth expressed in the object dawns on the mind of the artist by a process of revelation (magical, if not Divine) and he transfers this on to the canvas by virtue of his inspired mind and the informed will of his artistic skill. Indian art demands of the artist the power of communion with the soul of things.

K.C. Bhattacharyya

Krishna Chandra Bhattacharyya (1875–1949) was a teacher par excellence, a professor of philosophy first and last. For him, philosophy was a living meditative search for the ultimate basis of things, and he called it "transcendental psychology". He makes use of his incisive and sophisticated philosophical thought and expression to expound the idea of the ubiquitous Absolute, although he differed from some aspects of classical Advaita. He distinguishes three phases of philosophy: philosophy of the object (pure objective thought); philosophy of the pure subject (spiritual thought); and philosophy of the Absolute (transcendental thought) — corresponding to the three modes of the subjective mind of "knowing, willing and feeling". The first category is the Absolute of Advaita Vedānta, the second loosely based on nihilistic Buddhism, and the third based on the Hegelian Absolute.

Bhattacharyya wrote significantly on aesthetics as the concept of artistic enjoyment (*rasa*). To him, the artistic value of an object is "felt and judged", and this judgement indicates that there is a single consciousness of the object and the value. This knowing and feeling are the objects of a single reflective consciousness, indicating the *Brahman*. He said that aesthetic enjoyment (*rasa*) is "understood purely through feeling and in terms of feeling". In feeling, the contrast between subject and object becomes obscured, and they are mutually affected by each other. To the subject, the object seems to have a value which it feels attracted to, and hence becomes one with it. In Bhattacharya's words:

> Every feeling that is depicted in art is contemplated as, reflected in or sympathized with by the Heart-Universal. The person who contemplates the feeling merges his personal and private heart with this ubiquity.

Artistic enjoyment, therefore, is not the feeling of the enjoyer in his own account, but involves a dropping of the self-consciousness. It is the feeling of the third person freed from its references to the first person, that is "idealized" by being contemplated as "felt by" and "eternalized in this Heart-Universal".

Bhattacharyya argues that the conception of *rasa* may be interpreted only in terms of feeling, without any reference to the intellectual idea or the spiritual ideal. In the three grades of feeling (primary, sympathetic and contemplative), there are two divergent directions — the projective (creative) direction and the assimilative (abstractive) direction. In the former, the subject "enters into the object freely" and merges with the Heart-Universal; in the latter, the "value or soul of the object is drawn out as it were and reposefully enjoyed". For Bhattacharyya, Indian art is abstractive and contemplative, as against Western art that is dynamically creative. In Indian theory of art, the aesthetic essence is conceived as subjective absolute *rasa*, rather than objective absolute beauty.

The paper concludes by drawing parallels between the aesthetic

thoughts of Sri Aurobindo and K.C. Bhattacharyya. Both of them differentiated Indian art and philosophy as a way of life, to be lived and felt by the artist. Both agreed that Indian art was more spiritually abstractive, while Western art was more dynamically creative. Both enunciate three stages of art interpretation — three levels of aesthetic appreciation or feeling — primary, sympathetic and contemplative. This reflects the Western idealism of Kant and Hegel, and yet merges seamlessly with the Advaita idea of *Brahman* being *sat* (existence), *cit* (consciousness) and *ānanda* (bliss). Notably, these are neither parts nor properties of *Brahman*, they together form the spirit of undivided ubiquity. Hence, these two Indian thinkers of the early twentieth century are champions of Idealism in the realm of Indian art and aesthetics.

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10

From Seventh Art to Post-Aesthetics
Bollywood and the Demise of the Aesthetics of the Auteur

Anindya S. Purakayastha

The post-modern definition of the aesthetic is radically different from the modern notion of aesthetic autonomy and avant-garde connoisseurism. Post-modernity entails the dismemberment of Orpheus/Muse and it articulates anti-aesthetics or the aesthetics of silence (Bertens 1995). Since Friedrich Schiller, the aesthetic domain has been viewed as empowered with the redeeming and emancipatory abilities. Post-modernity however annihilates any such discourse of teleology and meta-narrative. Theodor Adorno, one of the prominent theorists of the Frankfurt School floated the concept of the negative aesthetic (Sim 2005: 157) which would be resistant to market demands and would be helpful in overcoming the aporias of contemporary culture. Adorno expressed his concern about the invasion of the culture industry and the rapid dissolution of aesthetic and artistic glory. He used the term *Entkunstung of Art* (Horvath et al. 2001) to mean the process of deaesthetization of the artistic sphere. To counter the apocryphal liquidation of the autonomous domain of art and aesthetics both Adorno and Jurgen Habermas emphasized the need for the revival of the *Aufhebung* or the sublation potential of art and aesthetics (ibid.). Cinema today is without doubt the most powerful form of popular art and culture industry. Market forces have denuded the artistic potential and aesthetic grandeur of the ontology of the filmic image. Bollywood

as a form of popular culture and popular art is no exception. The Althusarian notion of the ideological state apparatuses and market dynamics have been dictating the texture of Bollywood for long. Of late however there has been an attempt to lionize the normative claims of Bollywood by validating its deliberate loss of aura through the pedagogy and optics of popular cultural theory.

Dismemberment of the Sensus Communis and Gesamtkunstwerk

Aesthetics in the Kantian and Hegelian sense was relegated to the backburner by the new Gnosticism of post-modernity. The theory of the new mutant of post-modernism ousted the transcendental and a priori notions of aesthetics. Post-modernity spawned a radical anti-aesthetic which is eclectic and non-rigid. Hegel postulated the concept of the *sublation* of art. His theory of the *Bildung* and *Vernunft* (sense of good and beauty) as opposed to *Verstand* (instrumental reason) envisages an emancipatory and redeeming power of art and aesthetics. Kant's formulations of the aesthetics in *The Critique of Pure Judgement* underscored the concept of the *Ding-an-Sich* or the Noumenon. Kant's concept of the *sensus communis* (Sharpe 2006) or the collective sense of aesthetic and Richard Wagner's notion of *Gesamtkunstwerk* or universal-all embracing art work are concepts that envisage the possibility of universal artistic sense and artistic power (Sharpe 2006: 101; Michelson 1995: 26). The German ideological aesthetic notion was later taken up by the Frankfurt School members. Their theorization of the aesthetics is highly important because they probed into the impact of techno-capitalist scientism and instrumental reason on art and aesthetics in the twentieth century. Walter Benjamin's polemical essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* amply diagnoses the demise of the auratic art in the post-industrial world (Benjamin 1986). In the post-industrial age we are experiencing the exile of Venus or the exile of beauty in all spheres.

Venus in Exile: The Rejection of Beauty and Aesthetics in Twentieth Century Art

Recently we have witnessed a critical apprehension about the end of aesthetic and end of art. In books like *Venus in Exile: The Rejection of Beauty in Twentieth Century Art* (Steiner 2002) and *Art Matters* (De Bolla 2003) both the authors have expressed their concern that the age of the aesthetic is over. We are today verging towards a post-auratic and post-aesthetic age. Simultaneously there have been talks of new-aestheticism as well. Critical theorists have come out with new manifestos of new-aestheticism which heralds back the advent of the aesthetics after its ouster by post-modernity. Given this backdrop it would be interesting to critically engage with forms of popular art/culture which thrive on the doctrine of non-elite aesthetics or grounded aesthetics. Under the Hegelian aesthetic categorization cinema or the discourse of film does not find any place. Cinema is viewed as the seventh art because it is generally viewed as kitsch whose matrix is governed by the market. Cinema therefore was academically and theoretically looked down upon as low-brow and aesthetically impoverished. It thrived mainly on technological glitz and popular demand for glamour and spectacle. However film-makers like Andre Bazin, Alain Truffaut, Sergei Eisenstein, Satyajit Ray, Ingmar Bergman, Ritwik Ghatak, Abbas Kiarostami, Akira Kurosawa and Jean-Luc Godard have revolutionized the concept of film-making by ushering in theoretical orientations in film dynamics. Concepts like montage, mise-en-scene, jump cut and movements like Italian neo-realism or French La Nouvelle Vague radicalized the notion of film-making. All these avant-garde movements have raised the domain of film-making into a terrain of art and aesthetics. After these movements cinema ceased to be viewed merely as a medium of entertainment or culture industry. The director was sublimated to the position of an auteur/author (Michelson 1995). Given this theoretical backdrop one may revisit and re-evaluate Bollywood's claim as being the sole mechanism of India's cultural

soft super-powerdom. Film *pundits* have stressed on the aesthetic uniqueness and native touch of Bollywoodian art. Some critics have even traced the root of the texture of Bollywood Blockbuster aesthetics to the Indian *rasa* theory and the practices of Bombay Parsi Theatre. Recently Bollywood has witnessed a new wave of slick urban low-budget movies which too claim to have followed a unique Indian theory of aesthetics. All these claims of Indianness and Indian aesthetics in Bollywood can be deconstructed to pave the way for the emergence of a real Indian attempt of serious film making and aesthetic reformulations. Globalization, post-modern nihilism and late capitalism have exoticized native traditions and *deśībād* (nativism) by tacit process of homogenization. The time perhaps has come for a new aesthetic of Indian cinema.

Bollywood the Epico-Mythico-Tragico-Comico-Super Sexy-High-Masala-Art

Salman Rushdie in his novel the *Moor's Last Sigh* has described Bollywood in the following way — an epico-mythico-tragico-comico-super sexy-high-masala-art (Dix 2010). The derisive tone is quite evident. Rushdie even equated the experience of watching Bollywood with the experience of eating junk food. So Bollywood is not of substantial stuff. It is the biggest film industry of the world and in spite of the orchestrated effort to exaggerate the media attention of the West, Bollywood has still not been able to outsmart Hollywood in all sectors. It is yet to skirt its fringe status. The discourse of Bollywood has been analysed in various ways. Of late the dominant positions have been an espousal of the popular matrix of Bollywood. It is no longer fashionable to characterize Bollywood as low-brow or as mongrel art. Media *puṇḍits* and social scientists alike are unanimous in their observations that Bollywood is a site which embeds the complex texture of middle-class Indian socio-political culture. From the existing cornucopia of critical voices one can select certain prominent voices which have taken Bollywood seriously. Among these the most striking views are that

of Rachel Dwyer, P. Madhaban, Ashis Nandy and Vijay Mishra. This romance with Indian popular cinema has been generated because of the reigning glory of popular culture theories.

In the last decade the position of India within the world and global trends in consumerist habits and culture have shifted from fantasies to real possibilities and this is clear in recent hit films such as *Dhoom 2*, which is full of frothy fun, consumerist fantasies of travel, clothes and lifestyles that can be enjoyed by the gym-toned global Indian youth who moves freely around the world Bollywood bourgeois (Dwyer 2006-07)

Bollywood and Deśī Aesthetics

There have been attempts to erect a generic and essentialized view of Bollywood. This attempt of indigenous pattern formation has been described by some as fetishization of nationalities. The objective of this paper is to deconstruct the views of Dwyer, Nandy and others who have overdone and over-hyped the role and symbolic agency of Bollywood.

Assertions of the distinctive "Indianness" of Indian popular cinema or its lack have emerged from a variety of scholarly approaches (Lutgendorf 2006), namely:

Cultural-historical Approach: This traces the distinct features of Indian cinema to older styles of oral and theatrical performance, some of which survive into modern times. A fairly standard genealogy cites the ancient epics *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*, classical Sanskrit dramas, regional folk theatres of the medieval-to-modern period and the Parsi theatre of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (for example, Dissanayake and Sahai 1992: 9-17; Lutze 1985; Mishra 1985, 2002: 4-15, 39-45).

Technological Approach: Here the distinctive features of Indian cinema are traced to the advent of technologies of image reproduction during the second half of the nineteenth century, resulting in the rapid evolution and dissemination of a common

visual code for theatrical staging, poster art, cinema, comic books, advertising and so on (Pinney 1999; Rajadhyaksha 1987; Ramaswamy and Uberoi 2003). A related approach, confined to cinema itself, analyses camerawork and sound, noting Indian filmmakers' rejection of the "invisible style" and "centring" principle of classic Hollywood in favour of an aesthetic of "frontality" (especially in early "mythologicals"), "flashy" camerawork and a consciously artificial style.

Psychological/Mythic Approach: This approach reads popular films as "contemporary myths which, through the vehicle of fantasy and the process of identification, temporarily heal for their audience the principal stresses arising out of Indian family relationships" (Kakar 1983: 97). The favoured approach is psychoanalytic (for example, Kakar 1989: 25-41), although there has been one ambitious attempt to use a "mythological" film to modify a basic Freudian paradigm with respect to Indian culture (Kurtz 1992).

Political-economic Approach: This approach, drawing on the Marxist-influenced critical social theory of the Frankfurt School, attributes the distinctive features of Indian popular cinema to the material and socio-political conditions of twentieth-century India and of the film industry itself and argues that the films encode an ideology that "subsumes" a modernist agenda of egalitarianism, individualism and radical social change within a feudal and non-egalitarian status quo (for example, Kazmi 1999; Prasad 1998). Other similarly ambitious surveys see popular films as essentially allegorizing the political history of the nation state (for example, Chakravarty 1993; Virdi 2003).

In spite of the existence of all these critical approaches, the heteronomy of the artistic and popular/pedestrian has still remained unsettled. The artistic or aesthetic has been equated with the elite. The aesthetics of the Kitsch has been trumpeted as grounded and potent. If we evaluate the aesthetic in the Kantian and Hegelian ways then there has to be a normativity of measurement and aesthetics or *Bildung* will have an emancipatory effect. Some

section of the Indian intelligentsia believes that Bollywood gives a slum's eye-view of our socio-political dynamics and it has empowered the masses by providing a grounded aesthetics with which they can identify.

Initially let us problematize the indigenous inheritance theory of Bollywood. Madhava Prasad has said that Bollywood is a modern product and it would be wrong to ascribe to it an epical inheritance. If we do it then that would lead to fetishization of nativity. Prasad on the contrary studied the popular Hindi film as having a feudal narrative aesthetic. Critics like Rachel Dwyer and Ashis Nandy are of the view that Bollywood is immensely powerful in encapsulating the socio-political tension of middle class and lower middle-class India. According to them the structural and aesthetic low-browism of Bollywood is to be explained by its inherent tensions and reflection of the chaotic and complex social fabric of Indian middle class.

The New Wave Bollywood has been hailed by many as a strong contender of challenging the supremacy of Hollywood but before we go ga ga about such pathetic and blind emulation of Western standard let us decolonize the Cine-Muse and search for an alternative celluloid aesthetics which would be neither pro-Hindutva exploration of mythological aesthetics in Indian popular cinema nor should it be a mindless pastiche of glossy-glitzy-sleazy-formulaic song dance sequences in the name of movie. The average Bollywood film cannot move an inch without a specific genre element called "item number" and other similar melodramatic inanities.

Pervasive Impact of Bollywood/India = Bollywood?

Even if we pooh-pooh the aesthetic content of Bollywood we can not deny its invincible impact on the collective Indian psyche. Every segment of our life today is permeated by Bollywood mania. With IPLization of cricket we have witnessed the moneyed merger of two of the dominant forms of Indian popular culture. Critical theory therefore can no longer ignore the domain of Bollywood. The corridors of academia would be mistaken if they ignore Bollywood

as undeserving of any critical engagement. The time perhaps has come to critique the semi-imperial invasion of Bollywood discourse in our lives. Bollywood has already colonized the Indian life and we can have a clear idea about Bollywood's pervasive impact if we look at the following statistical details.

- **Ads:** SRK endorsed 39 brands in 2007 (up from eight in 2003) and logged 4.25 million TV ad seconds. Amitabh endorsed 36 brands and logged 3.16 million seconds. (source: TAM Media Research.)
- **Slogans:** Congresswallahs spray media with "Singh is King" SMSes after Manmohan government wins trust vote; even Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee lapses into Bollywoodese, deeming it fit to greet the winning cricket team with a hearty "Chak De India".
- **Social Campaigns:** Leave alone talent contests, quiz shows and *Big Boss*, reality shows, even social campaigns like Lead India rely on a Bollywood host.

Comprador Aesthetics

Robert Venturi, the American architectural theorist, wrote a book called *Learning from Las Vegas* which advocated the use of kitsch and esoteric forms in post-modern architecture. A similar situation has come in the Indian context today. We are all learning from Bollywood and that is being propagated hegemonically as the only form of valid learning and Bollywood is disseminating a kind of comprador aesthetics which can be called opiate aesthetics or the aesthetics of amnesia or aesthetics of passivity. Popular culture theorists are so convinced about the empowering potential of Bollywood that in their emphasis on semiotic interpretation of a cultural item like Bollywood they are completely ignoring issues of praxis. It is like aestheticizing just for the sake of it.

Kantian Imaginary, Hegelian Vernunft

Any discussion on aesthetics cannot take place without referring

to Kantian notion of aesthetics and beauty as enunciated in his *Critic of Pure Judgement*. Kant's hypothesis of *Ding-an-sich* or the noumenon and the Hegelian notion of the *Vernunft* are crucial in our assessment of aesthetics. During the Strum and Drung Movement in Germany, Schiller and J.C.F. Hölderlin too envisaged the possibility of the emancipatory or transformative power of art and aesthetics. German ideology has given birth to the idea of the *Promesse De Bonheur* which promotes the concept of *Aufhebung* or sublation. All these concepts usher in the element of the sublime in art which can uplift and transform the everyday reified praxis.

Fifth Veda/Seventh Art

The Hegelian postulate on art talks about six domains of art, namely architecture, sculpture, painting, dance, music and poetry. Cinema is therefore viewed as the seventh art (Turner 1998). Popular opinion of cinema refuses to look at it as art. It is viewed purely as a specimen of culture industry which thrives on the doctrine of political economy and theories of commodity production. However in the parlance of film theory, cine theorists like Andre Bazin and Godard, the protagonists of French La Nouvelle Vague cinema have floated the concept of Auteur aesthetics in cine-art. Since then the subjective touch of individual filmmakers is considered important and since then the claim of cinema as an art form got consolidated. The French word Auteur connotes the author or the authorial touch on the screen. Hence the aesthetics of cinema acquired a serious dimension in the hands of film-makers like Luis Buñuel, Bergman, Andrei Tarkovsky, Satyajit Ray, Kurosawa, Kiarostami, etc. New innovative devices of film-making like mise-en-scene, jump cut, montage were employed to augment the creative touch of films. Attempts were made to resist the corporate dictates on the formation of cine aesthetics. The avant-garde film-making movements influenced the mainstream of popular cinema like Hollywood and Bollywood. However with the advent of post-modernity and globalization, the foundational claims of aesthetics and art got dissipated and the avant-garde was branded as elite and

alienating because the post-modern doctrine blurs the distinction between the high and the low.

Demise of the Aura of Art

With post-modernity and late capitalism and post-fordism we entered the era of anti-art and anti-aesthetics. It is a virtual artistic apocalypse now. Walter Benjamin and other members of the Frankfurt School has already exposed the commercial axis of post-modern art and aesthetics. The aura of avant-garde art is gone. Are we then reaching the end of *Erfahrung* (aesthetics) in this age of mechanical reproduction? Recent publications like — *The End of Aesthetic Experience* by Richard Shusterman, *The Old Aestheticism and the New by Nicholas Shrimpton, The New Aestheticism* by Rei Terada, *Directions for a New Aestheticism* by Jeffery Petts — clearly point to the fact that the older Enlightenment model of aesthetic sublation has been ousted by the Kitsch aesthetics or corpothetics of the market today.

Hermenutics of Art or Erotics of Art

As a result of that the hermeneutics of art has been replaced today by the erotics of art. The libidinal economy is calling the shots. Popular cultural forms like Bollywood are thriving on post-modern consumption theory which encourages the establishment of privatopias where the normativity of the kitsch is validated. Theorists of popular culture justify the popular forms of art like Bollywood because they believe that it empowers the average population with the power of agency. The hegemony of Bollywood is not viewed as hegemony, rather it is regarded as a site for the free consumption of the audience who are free to interpret it in their own ways instead of being guided by a metanarrative of arche-meaning.

Genealogy of Bollywood

In the year 1913 we got the first full-length movie in India called *Raja Harish Chandra*. However activities of film production was there right from 1896. The studio system was scattered across

Bombay, Calcutta and Chennai. In the early days films were based on mythological themes. Critics have tried to trace similarities with the epical tradition of India and the filmic narrative structures. Some cine theorists have talked about a generic Indian way of filming. The Bollywood aesthetics has been described by some as *rasa* aesthetics, which is a culmination and combination of many *rasas*. The non-linear and episodic loose structure of Bollywood films and the predominant melodramatic content too have been ascribed by critics to the *Nāṭyaśāstra* effect. Some critics have also pointed to the frontality and tableau nature of film acting to the Indian concept of *darśana* and the tradition of Parsi theatre. The splurging of the song dance and the unique presentation of love in Bollywood has been traced to *Nāṭyaśāstra* and sufi metaphysics of love.

In 1951 the Film Enquiry Commission was set up. It called for a national film movement with radicalization and innovation of film aesthetics. In 1948 Satyajit Ray wrote an essay called, "What Is wrong with Indian Films?" In that essay he called for a revolution in Indian film-making. He stressed the need for a new idiom of filming and a new aesthetics of Indian cinema. The Auteur cult was emphasized. New breed of film-makers like Ritwik Ghatak, Mrinal Sen, Adoor Gopalakrishnan and Shyam Benegal emerged. With them came a new parallel cinema movement. The Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) movement also supplemented the revolutionary urge of film-making.

Works of Art in the Age of Bollywood Reproduction

Today under the pervasive presence of Bollywood, we are witnessing an uncanny emergence of a culture of control. The control is in the hand of the market. Pastiche and bricolege are the names of the game. Bollywood has given birth to remix aesthetics or a formulaic aesthetics which have dissolved all auras or originality of creation. Bollywood has encouraged the emergence of a standardized form of film production which follows a fixed pattern and a predictable texture. All these are being done in the name of popular culture.

The Auteur culture is therefore on a steady decline because of the corpothetics of Bollywood. In Bollywood there is no place today for the individual director to innovate or to revolutionize. Whatever is passed as unique and innovative in Bollywood is still formulaic. There is nothing path-breaking in Bollywood. The Auteur is silenced by the cacophony and rules of the bazaar.

New Wave Bollywood?

People are nowadays talking about the New Wave Bollywood. By this they mean to suggest the arrival of brand new directors who are coming out with more sleek and smart films. The film *punḍits* in India are really excited with these new arriviste film-makers. But barring few most of the new films in Bollywood today are aimed for the young urban upwardly mobile who would recline on the sofa of a multiplex to gorge on a three-hour long semi-pornotopia which reduces the success of a film to the splurge of the oomph factor on the screen. The new Bollywood film is more packaged, more techno-savvy and more glitzy and more vulgar but in terms of revolutionary aesthetics or aesthetics of new ways of film-making, Bollywood has still miles to go. All the validation of the kitsch has been possible because of the reigning glory of the post-modern popular culture theory which obliterates all distinction between good and bad, high and low. This culture theory is in connivance with the market mandarins who are calling the shots. The doctrine of Bollywood film-making therefore is anti-aesthetic and it needs to be deconstructed to pave the way for a refreshing and redeeming way of film-making.

Deconstructing Popular Film Aesthetics/ Hegemony of the Popular

Post-modern theory is being critiqued for its lack of groundedness and for its empty aesthetization and lack of agency. Globally there is a new trend today of the revivalism of the emancipatory power of the aesthetic. In the post-9/11 world critical theorists are looking for groundedness and value. Ludic post-modernism

is being lambasted throughout the world. Concepts such as the legitimization of the market and the end of history are being questioned. Theory is verging again towards praxis. Given this backdrop, there is necessity for the reformulation and reassessment of film theory and modes of cultural and aesthetic production. A new avant-garde movement in Bollywood should be explored. We need to ask whether there really exists a mass appeal of Bollywood films or the film production mechanism (the whole paraphernalia of corpothetics, fandom building, star gazing, film promos, aggressive distribution system, etc.) are inducing mass appeal by seducing their fetish for spectacle and by whetting their craze for the simulacrum. Is there a secret politics of contrived mass consumption of low grade Bollywood films in the absence of any resisting mechanism? Popular culture of Bollywood talks about the democratization of the spectators where the individual spectator is free to choose and to consume. Bollywood popular aesthetics is supposed to be a grounded aesthetic which does not smack of elitism. But in the name of democracy and non-elitism, are we witnessing an elitism of the popular? Should there be a search for the arrival of a new aesthetics of the mass?

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11

The Shelleyan Aesthetic
An Indian Perspective

P.G. Rama Rao

IN his "Defence of Poetry"[1] Percy Bysshe Shelley defines poetry in a general sense as "the expression of the imagination" and goes on to say:

> poetry is connate with the origin of man. Man is an instrument over which a series of external and internal impressions are driven, like the alternations of an ever-changing wind over an Aeolian lyre, which move it by their motions to ever-changing melody. — p. 23

Thus poetry is divine in character and the poet is an instrument, a lyre, which is Shelley's favourite instrument, on which an invisible power plays. The poet is stirred into an ecstasy and breaks into effortless song. Like Wordsworth he values this feeling of ecstasy supremely and believes in the spontaneous nature of poetic expression.

The poet is not merely an instrument.

> But there is a principle within the human being, and perhaps within all sentient beings, which acts otherwise than in the

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[1] Shelley's "Defence of Poetry" was an answer to T.L. Peacock's essay on poetry in Ollier's *Literary Miscellany*, "The Four Ages of Poetry", in which Peacock attacked poetry as a worn out delusion of barbarous times. It got published in the magazine, *Liberal*, as originally intended, but later published by Mrs Shelley.

> lyre, and produces not melody alone, but harmony, by an internal adjustment of the sounds or motions thus excited to the impressions which excite them. It is as if the lyre could accommodate its chords to the motions of that which strikes them, in a determined proportion of sound, even as the musician can accommodate his voice to the sound of the lyre. — p. 24

He draws a distinction between melody and harmony. There should be a harmony between the melody excited within and the impressions which excite it. After all mere melody makes neither music nor poetry — or any warbling bird would have given many a musical performance ere now, and music and poetry would not have developed as arts, What is important is harmony of melodies; an expression in melody in the case of music and a melody in expression in the case of poetry.

Shelley refers to the rhythm or order in the infancy of art and the highest delight resulting from it as follows:

> Every man in the infancy of art observes an order which approximates more or less closely to that from which this highest delight results; but the diversity is not sufficiently marked, as that its gradations should be sensible, except in those instances where the predominance of this faculty of approximation to the beautiful (for so we may be permitted to name the relation between this highest pleasure and its cause) is very great. Those in whom it exists in excess are poets, in the most universal sense of the word; and the pleasure resulting from the manner in which they express the influence of society or nature upon their own minds, communicates itself to others, and gathers a sort of reduplication from that community. — pp. 25-26

This then is his conception of a poet and the function of poetry. Is it not strange that this young man of a fiery spirit, who was at war with the whole world, who had not many admirers in his day, and who contemptuously referred to his critic — "I am there sitting where he durst not soar", should hold the view that poetry is not its own end but is meant for communication to society? He

refers to the "highest pleasure" at the source of poetic expression and calls the relation between that highest pleasure and its cause the beautiful. Evidently he has in mind what the ancient Indian aestheticians called *rasa* or "The Aesthetic Rapture", which dwells within and is awakened by some impression or other, yielding the highest pleasure. It exists in everybody, but those who have excess of it are poets. The poet's pleasure having communicated itself to others "gathers a sort of reduplication from that community". Shelley is not content with the pleasures of poetry. He gives it a solemn importance:

> Poets according to the circumstances of the age and nation in which they appeared, were called, in the earlier epochs of the world, legislators or prophets: a poet essentially comprises and unites both these characters . . . a poet participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one; as far as related to his conceptions, time and place and number are not. — p. 27

Shelley hastens to point out in this context that he does not imply that poets are prophets in the gross sense of the word, or that they can foretell the actual events as surely as they foreknow the spirit of events.

> Such is the pretence of superstition, which would make poetry an attribute of prophecy, rather than prophecy an attribute of poetry. — p. 27

Curiously enough, this is a traditional Indian conception, and Bhaṭṭa Tauta, a teacher of Abhinavagupta (both were great aestheticians of ancient India) said that the poet and the prophet (*ṛṣi*) were synonymous: *nanṛṣiḥ kurute kāvyam* (Sastri 1945: 25). In The Old Testament, the word prophet is used for the poet, but as Shelley himself points out, the poet is not a prophet in the narrow sense of the term. The *ṛṣi* is not simply one who prophesies the events to come. He is a holy man with a spiritual halo — an enlightened soul. Prophecy is one of his attributes. In India the poet has been given a high place even from the days of the Vedic bards who achieved a

happy synthesis of aesthetics and mysticism. Mighty kings bowed in reverence to them. But this adage does not apply to every poet who happens to scribble some verses. It is not verses that make a poet. A poet rises above time and clime. He participates in the eternal, the infinite and the one. This is the norm Shelley sets for a great poet and it is not one within easy reach of every poet. But Shelley himself fulfils it in some of his poems and joins the galaxy of great poets. There is a rare ring of rapture about his poetry, and great chords begin to sound as we read some of his great poems. A mystic light is thrown on the commonest objects under his treatment.

The influence on Shelley of the great philosophers of antiquity, especially that of Plato, was great. He says that the distinction between poets and prose writers is a vulgar error and maintains that Plato was essentially a great poet.

> The truth and splendour of his imagery and the melody of his language are the most intense that is possible to conceive. —p. 29

In Shelley's view Lord Bacon was a poet, and so are all the "authors of revolutions in opinion". They are:

> not only necessarily poets as they are inventors, nor even as their words unveil the permanent analogy of things by images which participate in the life of truth; but as their periods are harmonious and rhythmical and contain in themselves the elements of verse; being the echo of the eternal music. —p. 30

While great philosophers are great poets, great poets who have employed traditional forms of rhythm are not less capable of perceiving and teaching the truth of things than those who have omitted that form, and hence they are also philosophers." "Shakespeare, Dante and Milton (to confine ourselves to modern writers) are philosophers of the loftiest power." Poetry and philosophy go hand in hand and merge into each other at the highest level. Both are in Matthew Arnold's famous phrase "a criticism of life". This is a truth which is not perceived by many (being very nearly esoteric in character) and Shelley arrives at it

by personal experience and conviction. This is a peculiarly Indian conception. At the highest level there is a blissful reconciliation between emotion and reason — poetry and philosophy. The Bible, the Vedas, the Koran and other scriptures, as well as the great philosophical works of the world, supply ample testimony to this truth. He discusses what is poetry thus:

> A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth . . . the parts of a composition may be poetical, without the composition as a whole being a poem. A single sentence may be considered as a whole, though it may be found in the midst of a series of unassimilated portions; a single word even may be a spark of inextinguishable thought. — pp. 30-31

How true! Shelley must have had in his mind not only his own work but the testimony of the highest poetry with which he was acquainted when he came to this conclusion. The aesthetic rapture may be found throughout the poem in a steady glow, big and bright, or it may be found in flashes here and there — each flash a steady glow. Here again Shelley puts us in mind of the great Sanskrit aestheticians who defined poetry variously as a sentence charged with poetic rapture — *vākyam rasātmakam kāvyam* — and a word representing a charming idea — *ramaṇīya artha pratipādakaḥ śabdaḥ kāvyam* (Jagannatha 1955: 9). Wherever there is that transporting charm, there is poetry — whether it is a passage, a sentence or a single word.

Estimating its effects upon society he says:

> Poetry is ever accompanied with pleasure: all spirits on which it falls open themselves to receive the wisdom which is mingled with its delight. — p. 31

Shelley points out here that poetry has a salutary effect on the intellect of man. It helps in the cultivation of the higher faculties by bringing wisdom. The pleasure which poetry gives as "literature of power" is not the common pleasure of the senses. It is an exalted pleasure which illuminates the mind. Neither the poets nor the

auditors (readers) are aware of this process "for it acts in a divine and unapprehended manner, beyond and above consciousness".

He defends poetry against the charge of immorality and affirms that "poetry strengthens the faculty which is the organ of the moral nature of man, in the same manner as exercise strengthens a limb" (p. 33). Poetry awakens the mind and makes it the receptacle of a thousand thoughts. It lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world throwing a strange light on familiar objects. It makes us imagine intensely and comprehensively and puts ourselves in the place of others; the pains and pleasures of mankind become ours. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause". According to Shelley,

> The great secret of morals is love; or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person not our own. —p. 33

Thus moral good is implicit in good poetry and a poet would do ill to affect a moral aim.

Fanny Godwin writes in her letter to Mary (29 July 1816):

> I am angry with Shelley for not writing himself. It is impossible to tell the good that poets do their fellow creatures, at least those that can feel. Whilst I read I am a poet. I am inspired with good feelings — feelings that create perhaps a more permanent good in me than all everyday preachments in the world; it counteracts the dross which one gives on the everyday concerns of life, and tells us there is something yet in the world to as pire to — something by which succeeding ages may be made happy and perhaps better. If Shelley cannot accomplish any other good, he can this divine one.

Fanny is neither a philosopher nor a critic. I quote her as an ordinary lover of poetry trying to describe her experience of this divine faculty.

Poetry has been a vital force behind the moral improvement of the world and Shelley puts it emphatically:

> It exceeds all imagination to conceive what would have been the moral condition of the world if neither Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Calderon, Lord Bacon, nor Milton had ever existed; if Raphael and Michael Angelo had never been born; if the Hebrew poetry had never been translated. . . .
>
> — p. 51

Well, it might be asked, "What is their contribution to the moral good of the world?" They were not moralists; they were not leaders of any movement aimed at moral improvement. But they have given good ideas to the world and helped in the dissemination of general good; they have made men think and feel; they have kindled the imagination and sympathy in the minds of men; they have taught the secret of love which, in Shelley's words, is "the great secret of morals" (pp. 51-52).

Like the other great idealist thinkers like Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, Henry David Thoreau and Mahatma Gandhi, Shelley has seen the bane of our civilization. Man has made gaint strides in material advancement; but in spite of all this advancement he remains unhappy. It is tragic that, having enslaved the elements, he remains himself a slave. This is due to the vulgar neglect of the value of poetry. In a telling sentence Shelley sums up: "we want the poetry of life". Thoreau says in praise of this "poetry of life":

> The millions are awake enough for physical labour; but only one in a million is awake for effective intellectual exertion, only one of a hundred million to a poetic or divine life. — p. 96

Shelley believes that poetry is something divine and is at once the centre and circumference of all knowledge. "It is at the same time the root and blossom of all other systems of thought" (p. 53). By poetry he means not only the poet's work but the aesthetic impulse behind it. Life would be arid, where there is no poetry. It has a Promethean quality of bringing light and fire to humanity from those eternal regions "where the owl-winged faculty of calculation dare not ever soar". Life's ideals and values like virtue,

love, friendship and aesthetic pleasure and other "consolations on this side of the grave" would be impossible without it.

"Poetry is the record of the best and the happiest moments of the happiest and the best minds" (p. 54). It is common knowledge that we get certain visitations of thought yielding great delight now and then. These are fleeting moments, elevating beyond expression. These moments concern the higher mind in us and they are basically at war with our baser impulses. Principally imaginative men with a delicate sensibility experience this sensation which, while it lasts, makes the self appear what it is, "an atom to a universe". This is the ultimate truth, if there is any; this is the mystic experience which reveals the hidden links of life and illuminates the mind of the seeker. Poet Rabindranath Tagore's first mystic experience is illustrative of this fact:

> My religious life has followed the same mysterious line of growth as has my poetical life. Somehow they are wedded to each other, and though their betrothal had a long period of ceremony, it was kept secret from me. Then suddenly came a day when their union was revealed to me.
>
> At that time I was living in a village. The day came with all its drifting trivialities of the usual common place. The ordinary work of my morning had come to its close, and before going to take my bath I stood for a moment at my window, overlooking a market-place on the bank of a dry riverbed. Suddenly I became conscious of a stirring of the soul within me. My world of experience in a moment seemed to become lightened, and facts that were detached and dim found a great unity of meaning.
>
> —Tagore 1958: 95

It is like the experience of a man who, having lost himself in mist and darkness, and having fumbled for his way for a long time, finally knocks for shelter at the door of a house which proves his own. The poet arrests the sweet vanishing apparitions and clothes them in an expressive language. Thus he makes immortal all that is best

and most beautiful in the world. "Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man."

Poetry has the alchemical power of turning all things to loveliness. "It exalts the beauty of that which is most beautiful, and it adds beauty to that which is most deformed." The Indian aestheticians draw an analogy between Rasavāda (Alchemy) by which baser metals are transmuted into gold and *rasa* (aesthetic) rapture by which natural feelings are transmuted into sublime poetic feelings. There is nothing under the sun which does not undergo a metamorphosis under its power. It is twice blessed for it makes both the artist and the sympathetic admirer happy. The commonest things are shown in a strange light. The inward eye, which is man's third eye, and which, like the third eye of the Hindu God, Śiva, has a tremendous power, opens and sees things which the physical eye sees not. It is a kind of astral vision which unveils forms and facts behind or beyond the physical. Thus poetry strips the veil of familiarity from the world, and reveals *rasa* or the moving beauty behind its forms. It is the only power which discloses the spirit which lives in matter and helps us realize the mystic relation between spirit and matter. Thus a common bird like the skylark or the cuckoo described by the poet becomes divested of its familiarity and is changed into a symbol for certain thoughts, emotions and sensation. It represents an experience which reveals the spirit behind it and also the relation between mind and matter. Shelley makes a passing reference to this mystic relation in his Poem "*Alastor*".

Now upon the jagged hills
It rests, and still as the divided frame
Of the vast meteor sunk, the poet's blood
That ever beat in mystic sympathy
With Nature's ebb and flow, grew feebler still.

Concerning poetic compositions, he says:

> A man cannot say "I will compose poetry". The greatest poet even cannot say it; for the mind in creation is as a fading coal, which

> some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness . . . when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conceptions of the poet. —pp. 53-54

Here is the evidence of a poet as to how a poem is composed. According to Shelley the poet's inspiration fades away gradually as he composes. This amounts to saying that the aesthetic/poetic rapture is an elevating but evanescent emotion whose deathknell is sounded by the process of giving it a form or poetic composition. Thus there is an element of sadness in poetic experience. Shelley himself says in one of his best poems, "Ode to the Skylark":

> *We look before and after,*
> *And pine for what is not:*
> *Our sincerest laughter*
> *With some pain is fraught;*
> *Our sweetest songs are those*
> *That tell of saddest thought.*

Even the sweetest songs have a sad thought behind them that the poem is "but a feeble shadow of the original conception of the poet", the result of a divine inspiration or *rasa*, which according to the scriptures is the same as the Supreme Being (*raso vai saha*); hence the sadness which follows the vanished vision.

Spiritual enlightenment comes in a flash — like a flash of lightening. So does a mystic or aesthetic vision or inspiration of a high order (*tatidiva bodhodayati*) and in the process of giving it a linguistic/artistic shape the original inspiration fades away in a large measure like a beautiful dream or a poetic or prose composition written in our minds before slipping into sleep in the night and fading away in the morning when we sit down to write or Santiago's great marlin, caught on the high seas, reduced to a skeleton after the sharks of time attack it in Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* or even our New Year resolutions or the good plans we make for the morrow.

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12

Futuristic Humane Habitation Culture and Rabindranath Tagore

Arunendu Banerjee

Universal Learning

WELL-BUILT environment with universal knowledge-sharing educational atmosphere, for eco-communities can also bring futuristic green habitat under climate-concerned world atmosphere.

Unfortunately the wonderful and extraordinary capacity of life has been ignored by new-age man himself. Global warming, the worst over the last fifty years is attributable to human activities. There are many corrective approaches available to us. One of them could be the ideal of better-built environment, using and recreating green energy available naturally around us. Broad-based environment-friendly living design and green architecture can be the future of better bridged man and nature harmony. We now need to practise, cut and curtail more creatively, for our better living future.

Ecologic ethics is most desirable in our design world of architecture. Architecture and the built environment are reflections of our society. Our attitude, customs, desires, needs and technologies are greatly reflected in architecture. Sometimes, undesirable expectations in our society run counter to ecologic coherence and sustainability. With the advent of labour-saving and comforting technologic conveniences, less energy-intensive lifestyle has been displaced. In line with this lifestyle, architecture

has also become more energy intensive. In search of sustainable architecture, our world has started critically looking back to the twentieth-century activities of architecture. This immediate past has not achieved anything vastly great. Many blunders of architecture, planning, and wrong uses of construction means and materials are apparent. Now, energy utilization bears a high degree of relationship to air pollution and environmental degradation. In an artificial architectural environment we are getting isolated from the natural forces like sun, air, earth and water. Even the local at-site natural energy is being largely ignored in concept, planning and design of architectural equations. The functional space planning, sitting of architecture, urban connections — the zoning need essentially to be restructured with greater concern with solar access, daylighting and the uses of natural lighting. Nature-built effective flexibility needs to be equated with ecologic design. Our responsibility lies in developing ecologic design habitat which will take care of ecologic and biologic vitality of a place. Interdisciplinary design approach of ethical aesthetics to ecologic equation will be necessary for our holistic societal relevance for better nature-linked holistic future.

One of the finest examples of glorious past to living future may be relooked as role model and ideals of idea-in-action — the Santiniketan built environment. Let us look into Santiniketan Ashram, India, of Rabindranath Tagore, the friend of the earth. Although the foundation work of Santiniketan was started during 1861-62 by the poet's father Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, which also converges with the appearance of Poet Laureate. Santiniketan Ashram School was popularly known as poet's school, a uniquely-built environment campus for universal learning was founded by Rabindranath Tagore in Bengal, during 1901. This was a conscious attempt of reviving and recreating the modern harmony for total expression of environmental green art and aesthetics in architectural set up representing the humane elements in all functional aspects. Rabindranath (1861–1941), the Nobel Laureate in literature, poet, music composure, writer, painter and the eminent

maker of our modern ecologic living, was the leading figure in Bengal Renaissance and of Indian Culture.

As a great creative innovator, and superb artist in life, he almost always extended himself to other creative avenues of expressions. Santiniketan envio-habitation design is perhaps one of his finest experimentations to improve humanistic environmental future. The Santiniketan–Sriniketan culture of eternal expression of the education-habitat with nature, the landscape and man–nature settlement planning, do have the creative strength for spreading global community consciousness and neo-environmental activism. The concerted natural spring of applied art and science movement and creative urges for cultural identity in the form of idea-action centre, emerged into this spirit of synthesis. The complete environmental knowledge as imparted by Rabindranath can be the futuristic light for improvement of quality of life; which fully uses low-cost but ecologic remedial options, towards a new humanistic order, the world without borders, for better living conditions, based on the experience in the theory of life in environment, modern village communities, rural reconstructions, city–village interactions, cooperative principles and the migrations to the common plane of environmental sustainability.

Santiniketan, where Rabindranath Tagore's dream of open university for the synthesis and unification of universal learning came into reality, was initially based on the spirit of ancient Indian *āśrama* — the seat of learning. It was also known to the world as forest school.

From the barren land of *khoai*, the forest-school environment was created through the effortful landscaping and tree plantation matching with the building elements. Santiniketan was built in various stages fully utilizing the natural surroundings, complimentary to Rabindranath's dream of the eternal involvement of nature in all technological achievements.

The uniquely-built environment of the Santiniketan centre

for World Education had been conceived by Rabindranath and his colleagues, mainly the planners like Surendranath Kar, Rathindranath Tagore (his designer son) and outstanding artists like Nandalal Bose, Ram Kinkar, Binod Behari so also designers and horticulturists designers Kasahara, Konosan, Tejes Chandra Sen, Pratima Devi, Ram Kinkar and Binod Behari in a conscious attempt to create harmony in totality.

Patrick Geddes, one of the close friends of Rabindranath, was the pioneer in architecture, town and country planning. He was the staff of Edinburgh University; he came to Calcutta, in 1915, bringing the unique "Town and City Planning Exhibition". He later, worked in India for various town and regional planning projects as well as in the same period of the campus planning at Santiniketan. Tagore was deeply interested in Patrick Geddes' concept of Triad: place–work–folk, as well as in their common concept of the development into the theory of learning, through the generations. Patrick Geddes, as a planner and architect did realize Tagore's vision of learning and the role of Indian arts and culture. The philosophies of Geddes and Rabindranath, matched and the universal humanistic creative direction started at Santiniketan. Land–people–environment relations were harmonized into neo-built environment culture. During this period, a conscious attempt was made to live in tune with nature and the environment, and to shed unnecessary expenses and discard wasteful construction.

To show gratitude towards Santiniketan, Geddes sent his son Arthur Geddes and then an able young Indian architect Vaman Rao to work there. Arthur Geddes, inspired by Rabindranath, had made a detailed study and regional survey of rural Bengal and related field study of human geography for water level–water table, soil settlement, weather study and wind movement and habitat study of the rural folk. Patrick Geddes had studied the philosophy of art and architecture in India and had the rare opportunity to understand the inner philosophical and aesthetical strength of India through the two geniuses, Vivekananda and Rabindranath. It may also

be mentioned that Patrick Geddes was the biographer of Indian scientist Jagadish Chandra Bose. Arthur Geddes was touched by the learning atmosphere of Santiniketan, and he wrote:

> The olive grove under which Socrates spoke with Plato, Aristotle and their fellow disciples, was as it were, re-planted at Santiniketan with tall and robust *sāl* trees and flowering evergreen *āmalakī*.

Aesthetic Expression

The foundation work of the Ashram, a spiritual retreat, was established by Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, the philosopher-father of Rabindranath, during the period 1861-62. He was responsible for the pioneering work of making the barren spread into green Santiniketan, the Guest House building (Santiniketan) Upāsanā temple, Chatimtala, and the surrounding architecture were designed and built during 1862-91. The school was fundamentally based on the spirit of the ancient Indian *āśrama* — the seat of learning. Rabindranath's dream of an open university (Visva-Bharati) for the synthesis and unification of a universal learning centre saw the light of day in 1921.

Landscaping art was also developed for the regional area of the core campus and adjoining spreads blending it with the art-architectural environment and reflecting elements of art-in-action. As in the case of ancient Nālandā, Santiniketan was also built in various stages, fully incorporating the features of the natural and ecological surroundings. Neighbouring village, folk and rural natural environmental life were taken into the place planning respecting the site-specific biologic and ecologic vitality, quite close to the poet's own creative and humanistic philosophy.

Santiniketan reflected the special flavour of building traditions, through the revival of Indian and oriental art–architectural heritage. An attempt was made to incorporate neo-built forms, which are environmentally sound, economical and locally available yet strong and simple in aesthetic expression. Such architectural

elements of poetic fusion, complimentary to the environment formed the fabrics of the *āśrama*'s life forces.

Tagore's personal experience of nature and the building expression inspired the development of the designs of the built and unbuilt spaces. The art of the built form and its sense of proportion, and the visual interpretation of dimensions, volumes and space are evident throughout the campus.

Stylized buildings, open-air sittings, class areas, performing stages, water wells in the surroundings of open-air sculpture, murals, paintings and relief sculptures, bring the unique synthesis of the three arts: architecture, sculpture and painting. These are presented in a natural style which brings out a new expression of art and aesthetics in total form. Possibly, such natural design activities are reflective of great revival of Oriental art in the context of modern living-design movement. This approach of interactive art is increasingly relevant in the modern world of humanistic design habitat, under the present scenario of environmental disasters and collapsing man–nature relations. These unique concepts of built environment were introduced by Rabindranath, ably assisted by the planners, designers, artist–architects of Santiniketan–Sriniketan. Such nature-centric design culture, popularly known as Tagoreana, was deeply appreciated by the then Eastern and Western thinkers and doers who were concerned to broader humanity and cultural unification of two worlds.

The building and the surroundings with the landscaping and gardening were creations of an inspiration for an informal living style and habitat with nature. Rabindranath questioned the very basics of life with respect to the relationship with built forms and omnipresent universal space. The Uttarayana building set-up and the campus architecture of Santiniketan and Sriniketan are such expressions of experience in living style. Almost all types of buildings and architectural settings were attempted, such as mud hutments, thatched cottages, low-height concrete open-air classrooms, studios, brick architecture and concrete

dwellings. These are both formal and informal, open-ended architectural examples with diverse designs, building materials and experimentations of design economy.

Udayana is one of the prominent examples of personal and impersonal unity of the built form, centrality of space with form, texture and rhythm, which effectively blend, using the basics of the oriental cultural ethos. The stylized columns, Rajasthani precast jail, Japanese style timber work, garden, split-level functional rooms, creative interior settings and furniture were brought together along with the basic envio-art-architectural theme. The poets' lyrics of *Seshsaptak*, *Punascha* — the books of poetry, as if harmonized with such built environment in their creative spirit.

Philosophy of Coexistence

Indian traditional knowledge of human space habitation, in relation with cosmic forces (man, land, water, air, sun, rain, flora and fauna) and the organic architecture was known to us for several years but such experiences started declining during the 300 years of colonial rule. The campus re-established a variety of such examples of habitation and experimentations based on the philosophy of coexistence. The Indian ethos was an integral part of the living style in Santiniketan. This creative fusion had the latent strength of future in the sighting of oriental culture for universal language with respect to land, people and environment.

Design opportunity associated with pedestrian access, mixed use communities, diversified housing, community hygiene and safety and the intangibles of the "sense of place" were experimented and presented for overall facets of community life. Several aspects of campus building and landscape planning, including environmental, conservation and aesthetic considerations, were integrated with the campus set-up.

Santiniketan and Sriniketan were, according to Rabindranath, the ideal combination. They incorporated the facilities, potentials and strength of problem-solving directions as regards to human

habitation with dignity in life. The active architectural space with the need for aesthetics, also transformed the built form into a work of art, very similar to the poet's own creative life and his vision of cultural continuity to futuristic voyage of forms.

The foundation of an East–West comprehensive character of an Indian design institute was almost naturally established in content, style and form. Rabindranath's personal interaction with the Western world had attracted a series of outstanding visionaries and creative doers at Santiniketan and Sriniketan. Lenard Elmherst, William Pearson, Sylvain Lévi, C.F. Andrews, Patrick Geddes, Stella Kramrisch, Ms Pot, Ms Millward, Andree Karpeles, Arthur Geddes, Gretchen Green, Dr Hary Timbers, Kasahara, Konosan, architect Vaman Rao are some of those, who with their experience and abilities also participated in this process of synthesis of living art and culture respecting the environmental ethics and broader humanity. East–West interactions brought out a new order of modern community living art and science towards betterment of human living standards. Creative and utilitarian functions of art and architecture did establish distinct venture of homogeneous art expression. The Indian College was founded in France in 1929 by Patrick Geddes with the same concept, and Dartington Hall was also established in the United Kingdom during this period by L.K. Elmherst. Rabindranath and his Santiniketan–Sriniketan model was the inspiration behind these pioneering efforts in the Western world.

Envio-Cultural Model

Rabindranath Tagore and Patrick Geddes very successfully had pioneered important link between quality of the environment and the quality of education and practice. School with essential nature study courses, rural studies, at-site training on public health and humane habitation work were harmonized with active local-level participation towards environmental development and better living conditions; with practised knowledge, both coded and uncoded,

for ecological appreciation and environmental understanding, which were main stays of their innovative living-environment design culture.

It is interesting to note that both Patrick Geddes and Rabindranath were converging on envio idea–action synthesis, at the significant time of interwar years. Their built environmental vision also had played vital inspiration for site-specific socio-environmental thesis work, "Bengal Study", "Au Pays de Tagore" (In The Land of Tagore) by Arthur Geddes during 1928.

Participatory environmental management ideals were developed from the primary level of *āśrama* school education. Teachers, students, international experts, local villagers and tribals were mutually working for better built environmental actions, sanitation, garbage disposal, water resource management, forestration, gardening and greening the campus and its adjoining area. Cleaning and efficient maintenance of water tanks, soakpits, ponds, were also the part of *āśrama*'s education. Gardening class and practical training to ecologic life nurturing were at the central curriculum from the inception of the *āśrama* school. Waste water recycling, composting methods from garbage — the reuse culture, were part of campus education and campus daily life. Red Cross Wind Mill (1916) was installed for water lifting energy from large water well and its subsequent distribution. Relation between man and nature, the eternal cycle, were presented to the students through such ideals of living envio-cultural models. Continuity of natural life-spring was also presented for grassroot education system, with various innovative campus festivals like Basanta Utsav (spring festival), Halakarshan Utsav (harvesting festival), Briksha-Ropana (tree plantation festival), Barshamongala (invitation to rainy season for fertility), Pous Utsav (foundation day festival of Visva-Bharati, Art-Life Cultural Synthesis) (cultural festival of art and craft and village mela), Nandan Mela (festival of art and craft), Shilpa Sadan Mela (festival of folk art, daily use items and craft), etc.

Ashramites were trained to participate with their knowledge

for rural reconstruction, better cultivation methods also giving importance for effective rural sanitation, water harvesting, public health and personal hygiene. Even public health cooperatives were formed to fight malaria and other waterborne diseases. Living quarters and habitats were designed using cost-effective building materials, fully utilizing local skills, local materials. Art–architectural sitting were also given full priority at the campus, as living art and culture. Local folk and tribal ecologic traditions for building construction were brought into this creative built environment.

Patrick Geddes (1854–1932), famous biologist (very able student of famous scientist Thomas Huxley), environmentalist and father-figure of modern regional planning from Scotland, had founded "Environment Society" in 1884. He had also published *Evergreen Journal* during 1885, one of the pioneering environmental activisms and education in the West. Patrick Geddes with his "Students hall residence in Scotland" had developed environmental movement of better living environment, with the help of students and regional workers. Geddes had provided the leadership for better environmental sanitation, development of potable water supply system and redesigning humanistic habitation for economically backward people at Rosenberg.

During 1892, Geddes and his wife, Anna along with the college students, initiated small-scale green village reconstruction at various scales, to fight against the environmental disorders and also to enhance ecological and biological vitality of the living community.

Modern environmental designers largely attribute the founding of environmental education and built environmental culture in Europe to Scottish Professor of Botany and an originator of town and country planning, Patrick Geddes. Through his original field-study centre the "Outlook Tower" in Edinburgh, the unique centre of environmental thoughts and practices were elevated into land–people–environment movement, popularly known as the triad:

Place-Work-Folk, during early part of twentieth century. But the details of relationship of a modern town and country planner of the West, Patrick Geddes and the Eastern light of creative unity — Rabindranath Tagore — are generally overlooked and yet untold by modern environmental writers and designers.

Geddes had worked in India for various regional planning projects between 1915 and 1925. He had travelled widely in India with his travel-worn briefcase inscribed with "To P. Geddes from his friend R. Tagore" and had prepared reports on over fifty Indian towns as a consultant.

Environmental philosophies of Geddes and Rabindranath had matched with the creative direction that was started at Santiniketan as well as in the making of Indian College in France.

Indian College was established at Montpellier in 1929. History was being made. Studies on Indian art and culture, India's environmental education, cultural relations of place, work and folk, both traditional and modern, were taken into the strides of centre of practice in France at the time when India was struggling for political freedom. India's eternal messages of peace and culture, work and education, life and beauty were coming up as the great inspiration in building ideals at this centre in Europe.

Indian College was founded by its Director, Patrick Geddes; he had with him another friend of Indian art and culture, E.B. Havel. The Secretary was G.G. Advani. Rabindranath Tagore was invited as President. Jagadish Chandra Bose, Brajendranath Seal and Michael Sadler were the vice-presidents. It was the dream towards deed, thought and action to create a great globe envio-culture.

The Eternal Dream

On 16 September 1929, Indian College was inaugurated with Rabindranath's musical melody. Music was presented by the able student of Rabindranath, Arthur Geddes, who was also known as an outstanding violinist, trained with Tagorean music, while he

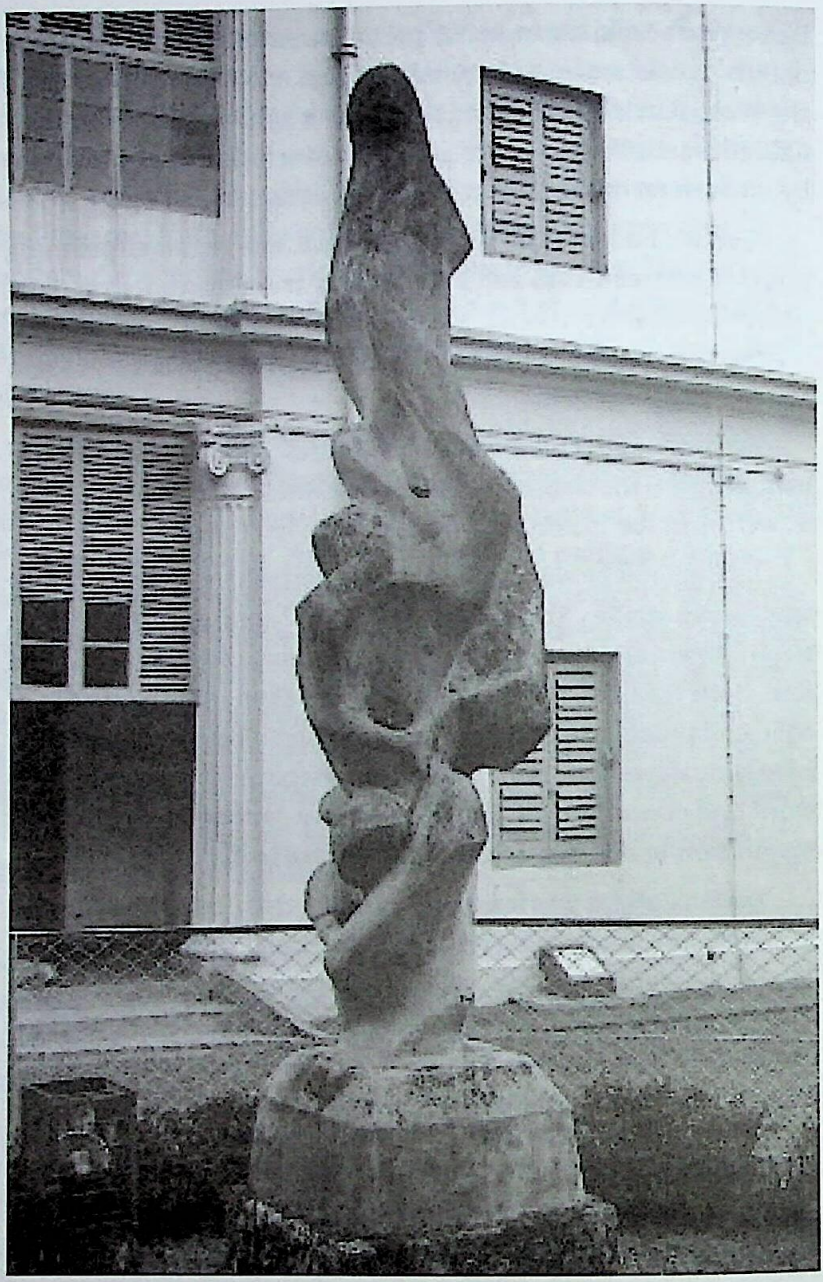

fig. 1: Sculptural art at entrance of Santiniketan Griha, Santiniketan

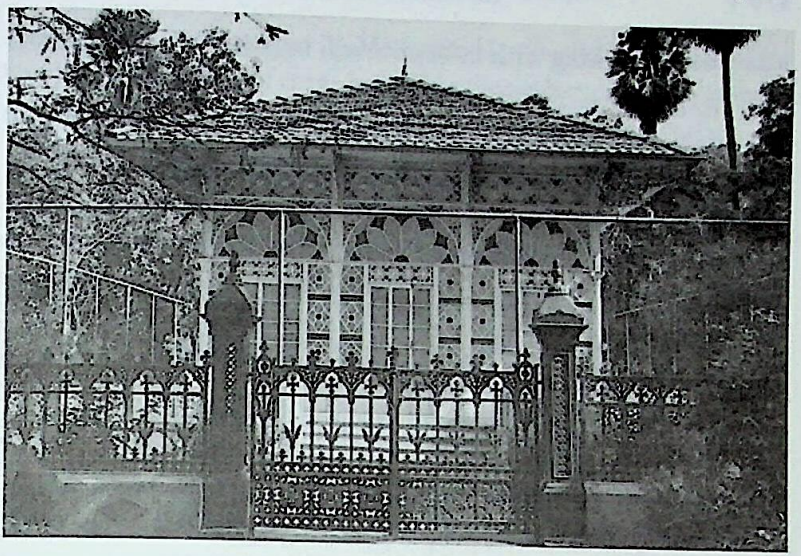

fig. 2: Prayer hall in Santiniketan

fig. 3: Udayan, Santiniketan, Uttarayana

was closely working with Rabindranath in India. The song goes:

The eternal dream
is borne on the wings of ageless light
That rends the veil of the vague
and goes across time
weaving ceaseless patterns of Being . . .

Geddes had earlier sent his son Arthur Geddes (1895–1968) to work at Sriniketan, during 1921-24. Arthur Geddes, who later on, became very famous in the Western world as an eminent "social engineer", was greatly indebted to Rabindranath for his guidance towards envio-research work. Arthur, with the inspiration of Rabindranath, had made a detailed study and original field survey of rural Bengal, her land, people and environment. River studies, habitat design, socio-biological, ecological-cultural studies were formed into wonderful and significant research works. His thesis "Bengal Study" was prepared and centred at Visva-Bharati, which was recognized with PhD award at Edinburgh University in 1926. "Au Pays de Tagore" (In the Land of Tagore) had also brought DLitt honour to Arthur from Montpellier, France, in 1928.

Rabindranath had given the sense of head–heart vision for Arthur's hand of creativity in planning and also to the social survey for re-structuring environmental, population-geography report scheme. Rabindranath had also inspired Arthur to meet the river and her life by trecking the river and the adjoining villages for Bengal Thesis project. During this period Arthur as a travelling geographer in real sense went ahead in the work to understand and document the river life civilization of Bengal. 'River carries the eternal message of country', Rabindranath's realised vision was in his heart. Consequently he made journeys in rivers like Padmā, Meghnā, Yamunā, Sarasvatī, Ganges, Brahmaputra, Tīstā, Dāmodara, Ajoy and Kopai. Environmental geography of the villages like Goalpara, Madhpur and Surul were also included, so also the habitat and living-space planning of traditional folk and tribal

architecture. In his paper "A Masque of Earth and Man" (1923) he had included details of rural-based handloom handicrafts, ecologic life pattern, including anthropological–architectural details.

These environmental studies and field-work on regional survey and human-settlement planning had established better modern environmental education and nature study movement; experimentations on city–village design, mid-term urbanization were made through concerted efforts of Patrick Geddes, Arthur Geddes, Rabindranath and Rathindranath during interwar period. Visva-Bharati was recognized by them as the central creative force of inspiration and environmental work laboratory, even in the West.

Efforts were drawn up to form world environmental education and practice-structure and ideals for better living ethics at the time when consciousness on global humane environment was of great necessity during interwar years. History was in the making, directions to life education were drawn up, which were the fundamental seeds of broader humanity and better-built envio-culture.

With the initiative of Arthur Geddes, Tagore centenary was celebrated as a part of famous Edinburgh Festival with creative support of Edinburgh University. This festival does have great importance from cultural presentation point of view in the world, even today.

On 13 May 1961, interesting news came up in *Scotsman Weekend* magazine — on planning of "Presenting Tagore in Sound and Sight". Theme pavilion was constructed. This kind of theme pavilions based on Rabindranath's life and work were very unique. Even today such type of theme design presentations encircling the life of Rabindranath and his Santiniketan are unique and rare. In spite of archival material advantage, presenting Tagore in a theme design pavilion is difficult, because of immense varieties and dimensions of multilayered creative life and personality of Rabindranath.

Finally, the exhibition was organized at Adam House in Chamber

Street during 28 August through 9 September 1961. Painting, literature, music and cultural creativity of Rabindranath along with his ideas and ideals on built environment, rural reconstruction (Santiniketan–Sriniketan model) were presented. Basic Theme Pavilion was constructed using stabilized mud architecture in tune with folk architecture of Bengal; also using the flavour of Tagorean land of aesthetics and her culture. Varieties of natural plants, shrubs, flowers and leaves were taken from India to create the presentation. Bengal's geographical spread and geopoetical expressions were also presented along with river-linked culture which was very close to the poet's heart.

Such envio-architectural expressions had the rare abstraction of the poet's life in light and shades, sound and music. Rabindranath's song "Deep in my heart he lives everywhere" was flowing in at this sound and light theme pavilion. Santiniketan–Sriniketan's objectives and expressions were narrated in visual design panels at the first floor of Adam House.

India's rich handloom–handicraft, art and craft, rural art heritage and rural reconstruction glories were also added. During the colonial rule of socio-economic oppression, our national-natural ecologic life development was grossly affected. This exhibition had also narrated such experiments as, how seriously Rabindranath in a defined scale had attempted to encounter such negative forces through his positive creativity of rural environmental reconstruction were also expressed with methodical distinction. His positive attitude towards human welfare culture was described in a rational form. Such form also had expressed Rabindranath as a father figure of India's own initiative towards cooperative movement and rural environmental reconstruction, rural industries, modern scientific farming, agriculture, food preservation, etc. with people's participatory model in real sense. During this festival, an interesting article was published in *Scotsman* journal titled "Rabindranath Tagore: Bard, Musician and Seer".

This article written by Arthur Geddes contained a detailed

outline of the life and work of Rabindranath, his physical features and outstanding creative personality, his vision for better humanistic welfare. Focus on how East–West creative unity had converged and acted on his life and work, were interestingly formed as a part of presentation. Rabindranath was also coming up as a dynamic light of hope for better living design who had fully expressed the ideals of dual heritage through his practised life and creativity during the most difficult period of time. His creativity was centred around the humanistic, spiritual and scientific dimension; such logicals were also narrated in this project with documentary support. Dress design of Rabindranath, its speciality and uniqueness were also showcased in this exhibition. How he had single handedly innovated the idea of informal material for formal design presentation, using Indian ethos, was very effectively documented and presented in visual format. It was also said that Rabindranath was fully aware of the seriousness and importance of Nobel Prize. He was always ready with his untiring work for global human unity and of nature's unity, as inseparable part of his life's mission — Sādhanā.

During 27 August 1961, a musical programme was organized. It had rare composition of Tagore concept and construction of music. Creative melodies in English were presented; the programme was titled, "Songs by Rabindranath Tagore with Their Own Melodies". Some of the English versions of his songs were presented live, in melodies-in-staff.

Introduction was written with fifteen Tagore songs:

> Tagore's purpose in first asking me at Santiniketan and in the hills in 1923 to write down his melodies in staff, play them on the violin for his own and his friends enjoyment and publish them (Paris 1928) was first, to recall them in permanent form in staff as an international notation. Tagore was not merely a "poet" but singer–melodist–poet in one, truly a "bard". His second purpose was that his songs should be sung in an almost international tongue, English . . .

It may be mentioned here, Rabindranath was delightfully inspired and got interested in Arthur Geddes' work using the poet's songs and translating into Western presentation during Arthur's stay at Visva-Bharati. He was writing to his dear Arthur in a letter on 18 February 1926:

> . . . How delighted to have your letter. Do whatever you like with my songs; only do not ask me to do the impossible. To translate Bengali poems into English verse-form reproducing the original rhythm so that the words may fit in with tune would be foolish for me to attempt. All that I can venture to do is to render them in simple prose making, if possible for a worthier person than myself to verify them. Please write the accompaniment yourself. I can trust you, for you are modest and are not likely to smother my tunes with a ruthless display of your own musical talent. I shall be able to give the outline of the play from which the songs are taken in order to give them their proper background . . .

It may be mentioned that Arthur was a talented violinist. He was a specialist in presenting Gaelic melodies, quite conversant with Western staff notations.

Arthur had also gone into the details of Tagore melodies (as broader life culture) since he had the personal guidance and had listened to the poet's song from the bard himself. This was quite interesting that Rabindranath had asked Arthur to play his music in violin and write down the melodies in staff during summer at Shillong hills (1923), when the poet was writing the drama "Rakta Karabi" (Red Oleander). Arthur had used fifteen songs of Rabindranath in his environmental DLitt work as well as in seperate publication in Paris, 1928. Understanding Tagore's melody was very essential to realize Tagorean culture. The relation between Geddes family and Rabindranath were also encircled into layers of creativity. It was well realized that the poet's songs were very essential component in reconstructing global environmental cultural relations.

With such background of deep understanding, Arthur had

well utilized his first of its kind work on Tagore's studies, which still stands out in glory. He then translated and prepared melodies in staff of some of the selected songs of Rabindranath. Here is an example:

Deep in my Heart (Ontare jagicha ontarjami)
Ah, my master! I know not thy own singing
(Tumi kaemon kore gan kore he guni!)
Road that lures away (Gram chara)
Ah, my soul searches after seeks the distance
(Ami chan challo he, ami sudurer piashi)
O, we're Raja's-Royal, one and all! (Amra sabai raja)
March Alone! Stand Alone! (Akla chalo re!)
Call me, Ah! Call me never more! (Deko na !)
Silent Art thou, why? (Nirobe acho kaeno?)
Though my time has come to leave now, still they call me
(Pi-chu-da-ke)
O the gateways of the sound — let fling! (Basanta-eso he)
Ours is she-Santiniketan (Amader Santiniketan)

Arthur was a staff member of Edinburgh University during 1929-67. He was a specialist in human geography, became quite famous both in the East and the West as an eminent social engineer. Arthur had worked in India, especially at Santiniketan–Sriniketan. He was a staff member and research scholar at Visva-Bharati; known for his abilities in environmental work. Arthur always had great admiration for Rabindranath, he used to write on himself as "student–disciple of Rabindranath". He had worked with Tagore during 1921-22 through 1924-25 and again in 1939. He was a great admirer of India's rich cultural heritage, her vast green nature and creative people. Last time he came to India was during 1956 for the national planning programme of free India. Arthur Geddes was also the Chairman of Scottish committee for Tagore centenary celebration at Scotland. Through his personal understanding of India and Rabindranath, he could execute such project with great success.

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The Poet's Nest

Spontaneous encouragement for the development of creative learnings to protect and better the environment evolved permanent identity in the campus. During the golden era of Santiniketan, the harmony between the art and architectural movement could be earmarked as the milestone of the then modern Indian architecture. The kind of neo-traditional architecture and living style took into account of climatic conditions, local soil character, public health and tree plantation techniques; which is also evident in Rabindranath's philosophical approach to his own *sādhanā* — the realization of life. Uttarayan, Singha Sadan, Patha Bhavan, hostel buildings, Hindi Bhavan, China Bhavan, Kala Bhavan studio, Shilpa Sadan, Palli Sadan, etc. and the green surroundings, with a variety of sculptures, murals, open air installations and frescos are examples of art-in-architectural success. These inclusive art–aesthetical approaches in campus design attracted the Eastern and Western minds for better understanding of modern India and futuristic Indian culture.

The Santiniketan Campus architecture is the landmark of Tagore's own natural expression, which inspired innovations in revitalized art in architecture. The special flavour of building tradition through the revival of Indian architectural heritage was attempted for the establishment of neo-built forms which are environmentally sound, economical and locally available, but strong and simple in aesthetic expressions.

Tagore had built for himself in the initial period (1902-04) at Santiniketan. His three-room world of thatched-roof cottages, Natun-Bari, and brick-built duplex Dehali which were in great contrast with the dignified mansions of Tagore family and Tagore ancestral houses in different parts of Bengal. Rabindranath had an intense urge for the search of a living place, simple but full of light and space. The Santiniketan period of his life was the time when his personal living style started manifesting the influence of nature even more firmly. Even Tagore's creation of Visva-Bharati

Campus is a great Indian architectural departure, as compared to the "Santiniketan Griha" in the colonial style (the first building at Santiniketan) built by his father between 1862-63.

Tagore's own experience of nature and the building expression inspired the development of the designs, including the non-built spaces. The art of built form and the blending with the signs of proportion and visual interpretation of dimensions, volumes and spaces are spread throughout the campus by the creation of several centres and sub-centres. Examples like the sitting arcade "Mrinmoyee" (the creative work station) are also extended through sub-centres by creating smaller, low-height functional concrete sitting encircled and shaded by the palm trees at Uttarayan during late 1920s. The raised verandas as sitting and performing arcades at "Udayan" building are then formed into similar sub-centres; "Shyamali", the mud architecture, during 1935 in the Uttarayan complex.

Rabindranath's deep love for the natural living style, using the basics of the body, soul and mind generated the aesthetical parameters of building layout. Simple but efficient creation of different types of buildings — Konarka (1919-20); Udayan (1922-38); Chitrabhanu Guhaghar (1932-34); Kalobari (1934); Shyamali (1935); Tal-o-dhaj Kutir (1926); Punascha (1936); Udichi (1938-39) — reflect the design, full of sense of proportion and purpose, with visual pleasure and assembly of traditional elements, system of forms, mass and volumes, light and shade, along with the variety of experimentations of building materials and construction techniques. The last forty years of Rabindranath's life in campus development can also be noted for its unique art–architectural and civil engineering experimentations with ideal harmonizations of buildings with the existing skyline and surrounding nature. Local Santhals, the village folk, were also involved in the cooperative built-art movement with their traditional knowledge and creative experience.

The positive functionalist approach is seen in land use, sizes of rooms and spaces, management of scarce building materials and ecology, experimentations with mud architecture, open-air classrooms, open-air theatre, informal sitting and meeting places. Such approach are now very relevant in the making of twenty-first-century need of green architecture.

There are some wonderful examples of mud architecture, low-cost, but functional interiors, utilizing the oriental forms and sequence of spaces. The distinct character with its own intensity and rich variety created these buildings — which also represent the blend of Mughal architecture, Indian traditional architecture including Buddhist pillars and Indian traditional mud houses. Both coded and uncoded knowledge of living design culture were utilized almost at the tune of humanistic ideology and participatory in function to such creative atmosphere.

The Uttarayan complex, the five buildings and the raised sitting arcade "Mrinmoyee" show the harmonization of open-ended built forms amongst the dissimilar houses, with the connecting threads of landscapes designing like Pompa Lake, rose garden, and agri-horticultural Uttarayan gardenscaping.

Single-storeyed, split-levelled Konarka building was constructed in phases from 1919 on the extreme northern fields of the Ashram. It is noted for its first-of-its-kind split-level planning attempt, which gives a clear view of the horizon from some predefined area. Its large room placed at a higher plinth level was used as a stage for the dance and drama performance where Rabindranath's dance drama "Natir Puja" was staged. The interiors of all the buildings are well laid with aesthetical forms also for performing arts, yet low-cost with full of multiple use vitality.

Udayan, the east-facing house, was built over the years in phases from 1922 to 1938. In the design of Udayan, the textural synthesis of Chinese, Balinese, traditional Indian elements, Mughal doorways and Oriental Japanese window façades, Buddhist

pillars, modern construction techniques and Oriental interiors have brought the spirit of unity. The most striking features of the building are the successful management of fenestration, ventilation aspects, through the building orientation arrangements.

Kasahara, Konosan the Japanese designers and Indian furniture designer Achari — created the breath-taking Japanese styled garden with lake and the garden-house "Chitrabhanu", and Interior furniture with the creative guidance of Rathindranath Tagore. Kasahara also constructed the Japanese styled tree house over the Pakur tree for Rabindranath at Sriniketan (1923). Rabindranath's lyrical poetry *Purabi* started streaming from this loving "poet's nest".

Humane Heritage

The renewal of free expression at the campus also led to the creative expression of visual arts which provided the stimulus to the surrounding architecture. Traditional earth architecture was also adopted in the campus with the scientific aspiration of revival of art with purpose. Rural India, the folklores, the need for shelter and prevailing inhuman living conditions had always been of great concern to Rabindranath. Examples of mud architecture were evident in structures such as Bithika, Tal-o-dhaj Kutir and in several staff, teachers' quarters. Outstanding teachers like Jagadananda Roy, Khitimohan Sen, Bidhu Sekhar Sastri, Tejes Chandra Sen, Nandalal, Suren Kar, Vimrao Sastri, Dinendranath Tagore, Gourgopal Ghosh and Kalimohon Ghosh, pioneered the ashram living culture inspired by the poet. Inturn students and staff were inspired into such vibrating nature-centric interdisciplinary, inclusive education campus.

Kala Bhavan's principal, Nandalal Bose, rendered the perspective drawings of the setting, Shyamali, the mud-built architecture — while Suren Kar gave the final form. The exterior walls have high relief work of murals-wall sculpture treated with tar. The main doorway and the eastern corners were decorated with

the relief works like the Santhal (local tribals) couple, excellently rendered by sculptor Ram Kinkar. Balimejhen from Pearsonpally Santhal village, Gourhari Mistri, Purna Chandra Mukherjee from adjoining Goalpara village, provided their green hands, creating mud roof, mud wall-floor architecture into reality. Shyamali also came as poetic edition along with *Punascha* — the book of poetry. Dehali, Konark, Shyamali, Malancha, Punascha, Udichi, Tal-o-dhaj Kutir, Havell Hall, Kalobari, Chaiti — these three-dimensional living space forms, with the backdrop of greens, stand out as examples of a variety of dwellings with the creative fusion of aesthetics like mural, fresco art, open air sculpture, urban forestry, installation arts with purpose. A new direction was also achieved for the possible collaboration between artists, architects, designers, folk, tribal artists and engineers and all those interested in taking art out of the confinement of galleries.

"I long to build this mud house beautifully. The vanity of stone and brick will have to be put to shame," Rabindranath, the creative optimist always hoped. On his 75th birthday (7 May 1935) his dream came true in the form of "Shyamali", a mud house which represents the mood of majestic infinity. The experimentation took place in the pattern of the building walls (using earthen pots for insular wall aiming for temperature control of mud house) and roofs, using natural reinforced mud and earthen artefacts. The exterior walls of the building have the high relief work of murals treated with coal tar, which were created by artist and the students of Kala Bhavan. The main doorway and the eastern corner were decorated with the relief work of Santhal couple. "Shyamali" was very favourite to Mahatma Gandhi. He used to stay here during his visit to Santiniketan. This mud house had witnessed the historical meeting of two great minds — Rabindranath and Gandhi.

As an annexure block to "Shyamali", "Punascha" was born (1936). Its stepped terrace, with built-in garden and concrete sittings was the place for Rabindranath's early morning meditation and his work. Apart from his writings, many of his paintings too,

were created here. This three-dimensional living space-form, at the backdrop of green trees, stands out as one of the best examples of creative fusion of purpose, economy and beauty.

"Udichi" (1938-39) the last, north-facing house of Rabindranath, is an effectively functional, yet aesthetically meaningful building, having a distinct identity. The building is surrounded by well-designed gardens and Mughal-styled rose beds. This duplex type of building planning, in collaboration with nature has enriched the building heritage of the campus.

The raised sitting area and the covered canopy, amidst trees and greenery demonstrate the range of architectural visions and was named "Mrinmoyee" by the poet. This elegant sitting-corner, where the poet used to write and meet people is the refreshing structural Oasis, proportioned into garden landscapes. "Mrinmoyee" was also the resting place for Gandhi, during his visits to Visva-Bharati.

Similar building examples with balance of structure and nature are interwoven throughout the campus. The finest examples of earth architecture at the Campus are the miniature mud hut "Chaitya", hostel building of Kala Bhavan named as "Kalobari", "Tal-o-dhaj Kutir" which encourages the ever-lasting relationships with the land, people and environment. The Indian ethos are intermingled in the living style of Santiniketan. Bengal-traditional four sloped (*charchala*), eight sloped (*atchala*) roof design culture, were taken into new era of design habitat at Santiniketan.

In his last public message (May 1941) the "Crisis of Civilization", Rabindranath once again expressed his hope for the revival and continuity of the human heritage:

> A day will come when the unvanquished man will retrace his path of conquest, despite all barriers, to win back his lost human heritage.

Eco-friendly Santiniketan–Sriniketan and environmental broaderlands-community design for the futuristic humane habitation is the poet's finest experimentation. The fruits of rare

and unique convergence of scientific, humanistic and spiritual mind of Rabindranath were grown from here into the 'Lectures and Addresses' in connection with his realized truth as *Construction vs Creation* (1920), *Creative Unity* (1922-23) also the literary work of *Basanta* (1923), *Banabani* (1926), *Muktadhara* (1922), *Raktakarabi* (1923), etc. and ever flowing nature-centric *Gitabitan-Prakriti and Prem*, etc. These works of Tagore presented the urgency and societal responsibility and aesthetics to build environment-friendly living culture, to ecological aesthetics and ethics. Santiniketan is almost like his own autobiography, written in frozen melody. This is also very relevant in the present aspired context of 'Creativity and Environment'.

A new inventive look for the revival of experience and structure of expressions of Santiniketan–Sriniketan can regenerate the vital norms and spirit of life, art-in-action, city-village interactions, village reconstruction and river-centric habitation (reference of role of River Kopai, Ajoy onto the life-making of Santiniketan Ashram) into our life. These scientifically oriented architectural language of hopes and human aspirations and envio-community culture, do have the strength to face up the new challenges. This will be as important to India, as for the flame to live for the mankind. Green building, green home will always get inspiration with such flame of life and well-set examples of Santiniketan and Sriniketan built environmental culture.

We need to look to such glorious environmental initiatives, for our future generations. Formal and informal programmes of envio-education and better environmental management — the better living culture, can always get strength to illuminate the aspects of better-built environmental models in actual level, for our sustainable global future.

Santiniketan is a way of thinking, way of life. It narrates with the poet's own unspoken, but built words that land is a community, which is the basic concept of ecology and so also land to be loved and respected which is an extension of ethics. Santiniketan concept of

truth, the ecologic life and the built environment is Rabindranath's design for our futuristic humane habitation culture, our own green living design-laboratory for better sustainable holistic life design, relevant to our common goal of Green Peace World.

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13

Abanindranath Thakur
The Contemporary Fountainhead of Indian Aesthetics

Joy Sen

Revisioning and Repositioning Indian Aesthetics

A TURNING POINT: THE IDEAL OF THE MOTHER

The arrival of "Abanindranath" on a late nineteenth century portal of Indian aesthetics is indeed a turning point. His arrival brought in a spirit of great change. It fostered both rejuvenation and a revival of the spirit of Indian aesthetics befitting our contemporary times. Truly, Abanindranath is the fountainhead of a new *yuga-sandhyā* — sketching a new horizon of hope; lighting a new twilight for generations to come in India and abroad.

Today, his works offer a universal niche to the true lovers of Indian aesthetics and recovers them from a state of helplessness succumbing to a one-tracked infatuation and imitation of the sole machine-driven West. He is the only man, who probably was closest to the ideals of his master, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore. The fountainhead called "Abanindranath" can be best explained through the following words. They are from revolutionary-*yogī*-philosopher Sri Aurobindo:

> Afterwards came the night and a temporary end of all political initiative and creation. The lifeless attempt of the last generation to imitate and reproduce with a servile fidelity the ideals and

> forms of the West have been no true indication of the political mind and genius of the Indian people. But again amid all the mist of confusion there is still the possibility of a new twilight, not of an evening but a morning *yuga-sandhyā* . . . India of the ages is not dead, nor has she spoken her last creative word; she lives and has still something to do for herself and the humane people.
>
> And that which must seek now to awake is not an Anglicized oriental people, docile pupil of the West and doomed to repeat the cycle of the occident's success and failure, but still the ancient immemorable Śakti recovering her deepest self, lifting her head higher towards the supreme source of light and strength and turning to discover the complete meaning and vaster form of her Dharma. — *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, 1923

The change that was coming to Indian aesthetics put to action by Abanindranath is quiet inseparable from her culture, her philosophy and the way of life. The greatest of all contributions made by this genius had been his service to the Motherland — India: *Bhāratabarsha*. Abanindranath saw the Mother *recovering her deepest self*, as he delineated her (see *fig.* 13.1).

THE IDEAL OF THE SON

Abanindranath saw the change reciprocally. A tribute to the mother was also a transformation of the child, a sprouting soul off the soil. In the Indian perspective, he imaged it in the form of Śiva (see *fig.* 13.2) — the selfless spirit overflowing the limits of a universal soul. It is Śiva, who dares love all misery, and dedicates his life and mission for the better of all humanity. The imagery of Abanindranath and the following lines by Swami Vivekananda are complementary:

> *Dancing mad with joy,*
> *Come, O mother, come!*
> *For terror is thy name!*
> *Death — is in thy breadth.*
> *And every shaking step destroys a world for e'er.*
>
> *Who dares misery love,*

Dance in destruction's dance,
And hug the form of death —
To him the Mother comes.

— Swami Vivekananda
Kali: The Mother

THE IDEAL OF THE DAUGHTER

From the ascetic and the bold, Abanindranath made another move as he depicted eternal life, the spring and the beautiful. He brings to life, the supple and the soothing charm of the daughter, who embraces her larger family (see *fig.* 13.3). The spirit of transcendence is replaced by immanence and the universal. The vision of an all-pervading love becomes more important than the transcendental realm. Moving from lesser to greater bondage one emanates deliverance. A certain image exudes of these great thoughts is called "Leave this" and "Deliverance", quoted from Rabindranath's *Gitanjali*:

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the pathmaker is breaking stones.
He is with them in sun and shower, and his garment is covered with dust.
Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil.
Deliverance? Where is this deliverance to be found?
Our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation;
he is bound with us for ever. — Rabindranath Thakur

The Ideal of the Devotee: Vaiṣṇava Guru and Rādhikā

Abanindranath's first formal trainings in pastel, watercolour and life-study were under the supervision of his private tutor, Signor Gilhardi. He attended the studio of Charles Palmer, an English painter, for instructions in oil paintings and portraiture.

In 1895, he painted the Kṛṣṇa-Līlā series, which displays a unique blend of both European and Indian styles. E.B. Havell, Principal, Calcutta School of Art, on seeing these paintings was impressed and offered Abanindranath the post of vice-principal of the school. Under Havell's guidance, he studied Mughal and Rājpūt styles of painting thoroughly. Abanindranath, then from the Transcendent Ascetic Śiva — the all-renouncing son moved on to the mellifluous exuding of cascades of universal love, often personified as "Rādhikā" and the vision of an aspirant — called the "Vaiṣṇava Guru" (see *figs* 13.4 and 13.5).

AMAR MA: RECOGNITION IN THE HEART-OF-HEARTS

In the early years of the twentieth century, there was a renewed upsurge of nationalist fervour. In the arts, it resulted in a search and revitalization of Indian cultural history and its essence — her long-standing tradition of spirituality (Sen 2002). It was expressed not through the pictorial vocabulary of the foreign rulers but by reviving indigenous techniques and material. Here, Abanindranath made a full swing, and completed the full circle. He called it "My Mother" (Amar Ma — see *fig.* 13.6). The sacrifice of the Sacred Feminine, the Mother, her love for all, now outshines the machine brutality of a male chauvinistic and machine-dominated world.

Creating a National Platform

PARADIGM SHIFT: NATIONALISTIC MOVEMENTS

The nationalist project in art was led by Abanindranath Tagore in his lifespan (1871–1951). Some enlightened Europeans such as E.B. Havell, the principal of the Government School of Art in Calcutta from 1896, and Sister Nivedita, an associate of Swami Vivekananda became his close and inspiring allies (Sen 2002). That was another climax.

Moving away from oil painting and subjects that were popular with both the British and Indian intelligentsia, Abanindranath looked to ancient murals and medieval Indian miniatures for

inspiration both for subject matter as well as indigenous material such as tempera (see *fig.* 13.7a, b).

The Heart of Svadeśa (1907-15): Indian School of Oriental Art

The philosophy of a pan-Indian art that Abanindranath developed found many enthusiastic followers. Though in a myopic sense, some called it the Bengal School, truly it was a revival of pan-Indian aesthetics (Dey 1942). The style developed by Abanindranath was taken up by many of his students and others who formed the nationalist art movement often called the Bengal School, even though the style and philosophy spread well beyond the borders of Bengal. They sought to develop an indigenous yet modern style in art as a response to the call for *svadeśī* to express Indian themes in a pictorial language that deliberately turned away from Western styles such as those practised by Raja Ravi Varma (Roy 2003).

Abanindranath conducted workshops, tours and visits to "rediscover India" — historically, anthropologically melting various creeds, languages, and cultures in the making of sediments of layered, evolving and ancient civilization. He had send his students to the Caves of Ellorā and Ajantā and others to see, to feel and be convinced of the greatness of "Gandhāra–Amarāvatī Schools" of art and music. These schools had shaped South Asia on the one hand, and pan-Hellenic art forms through Bactrian art schools, on the other hand (see *figs* 13.8a, b and 13.9a, b), BCE. He touched upon the very heart of Asia — and gave her the recognition of being the ancient receptacle of global civilization (Dey 1942).

THE PAN-ASIATIC REVIVAL: BOTH SIDES OF HIMALAYAS

In his rejection of the absolute colonial aesthetic, Abanindranath continued turning to Asia, and most notably Japan, in an effort to imbibe and propose a pan-Asian aesthetic that stood independent of the Western one. Particularly, in his works the origins of Central Asian art resurfaced. The art of Sino-Tartary belt pervading the

entire stretch of "Silk Route" from Mongolia to areas west of Turkey, thereby spanning two continents found an empathy in his works (see *fig.* 13.10a, b).

Japanese stalwarts like Okakura Kakuzo left a lasting impression, as the Abanindranath and his following artists learnt the wash technique from them, innovating and modifying it to better suit their own needs. The themes most often seen in his school included misty and romantic visions of the Indian landscape, historical scenes and portraits as well anecdotes and incidents from daily life in the countryside (Roy 2003).

Recreating the Larger Indian Ethos

INTERDISCIPLINARY MOVES AND HOLISM

Painting and sculpture are but two of the many attainments of the versatile genius, Abanindranath Tagore. His manifold contributions to literature would rank him as one of the greatest of the time. Children's literature was the key in his works. In an effort to shape the nascent mind, his works on juvenile literature Like *Raj-Kahini*, *Sakuntala*, *Kshirer-Putul*, *Bhutapatri*, *Nalaka*, *Nahush* and *Buro-Angla* pleased the old and the very young alike. And there was also a touch of the architecture in his works, one being his deeper rendition of the *Temple of the Universal Lord: Jagannath* (see *fig.* 13.11).

BAGESVARISVARUPA: HEART OF SARASWAT WISDOM

As Bageswari Professor of Art of the Calcutta University, he gave a series of talks which were rare aesthetic illuminations; unparalleled in its simplicity and informalism (see *fig.* 13.12).

His other books on the essence and expression of Indian art and aesthetics systems (Vedāṅga) include *Banglar Brata, Bharatshilpe Murti, Bharatshilpa* and *Bharatshilper Sadanga* — all bearing the imprint of his great depth, profundity and simplicity. His prose had a distinctive quality. The outstanding quality is that even the most complex subject is rendered in a simple, unassuming style revealing the essence of his genius (Roy 2003).

The Wider Perspective: The Global and the Local

INTERNATIONAL CELEBRATION

Abanindranath's works have had been displayed worldwide — they were exhibited at the Calcutta Government College of Art exhibition (1900), Indian School of Oriental Art, Calcutta (1908), Crystal Palace, London (1911), the 22nd exhibition of the *Societe des Peintres Orientalistes Francais*, Grand Palais, Paris travelling to Belgium, The Netherlands & Imperial Institute, England (1914), Travelling Exhibition organized by the Indian School of Oriental Art and the American Federation of Art (1924), Athene Gallery, Geneva, Switzerland (1928) (Dey 1942).

Abanindranath had a large following of Indian disciples. It included a band of famous artists: Nandalal Bose, Surendranath Ganguli, Jamini Roy, Surendanath Gupta, Surendranath Kar, Asit Haldar, Kshitindranath Majumdar, Ram Kinkar, Binod Bihari Mukherji, Sharadacharan Ukil and K. Venkatappa.

These wonderful people generated a new enthusiasm in painting and other plastic arts and Indian artistic atmosphere was at the gateway to its modern age.

RENAISSANCE: TOWARDS A SYSTEM OF COMPLETE INDIAN AESTHETICS — INTEGRATING HUMAN ART AND NATURE

Abanindranath's artistic mind expresses itself not only in the field of painting but also in diverse other ways. He was interested in music and can play beautifully instruments like *sitār*, *vīṇā*, *esrāj* and reed pipes. He takes more than an amateurish interest in gardening. He did some bas-relief work on common marble used for the purpose of preparing hand-made bread and numerous portraits in pastel and oil, and has also done some fresco painting on walls.

REVIVAL OF GREEN BUILT-SCIENCES

Abanindranath brought to life the ancient Indian principles of re-use; the science of recycling; the rhythm of reorganization; the parable of reinvigoration; and the spirit of recognition. He called it

kutam-katam — a recovery from the backward, from the backdoors, from the leftovers of a carpentry workshop, or a smithy cell. He showed to the world almost a century back what we call today as "green politics and recovery".

Conclusion

The spirit of Abanindranath is still with us, working amidst us. His powerful mind is still creative. His work has been of great value in the regeneration of national culture in India. But our countrymen never rendered proper homage to him. Bengal alone has been slow to understand his gifts to her and even when she has come to appreciate them she has been slow to give recognition to the sublime attainments of the great maestro.

It is not often in the history of a nation that a genius like Abanindranath is born (see *fig.* 13.13). The paper concludes by recognizing Abanindranath as the fountainhead of contemporary Indian aesthetics. Let us be proactive enough to realize that his undying mission is an indispensable part of our future aspirations.

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http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/tagore/gitnjali.htm: Rabindranath Tagore/Gitanjali/(a) Leave this, and (b) Deliverance?

fig. 13.1: Mother India

fig. 13.2: Śiva

fig. 13.3: The daughter

fig. 13.4: Vaiṣṇava Guru

fig. 13.5: Rādhikā

fig. 13.6: Amar Ma

fig. 13.7a, b: Indigenous themes in Tempera

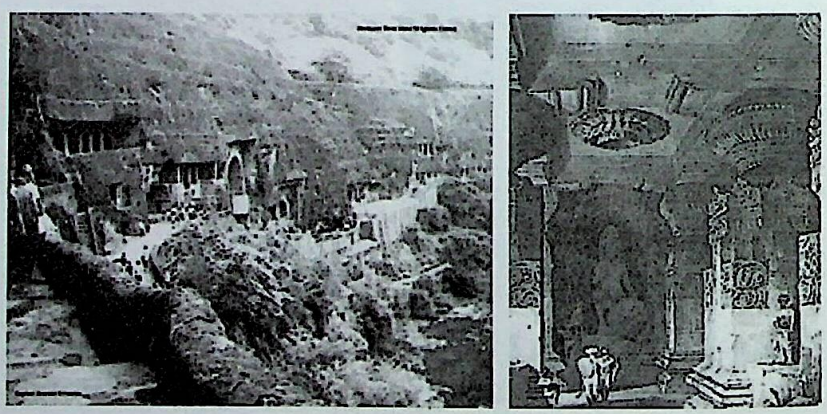

fig. 13.8a, b: Caves of Ajantā and Ellorā

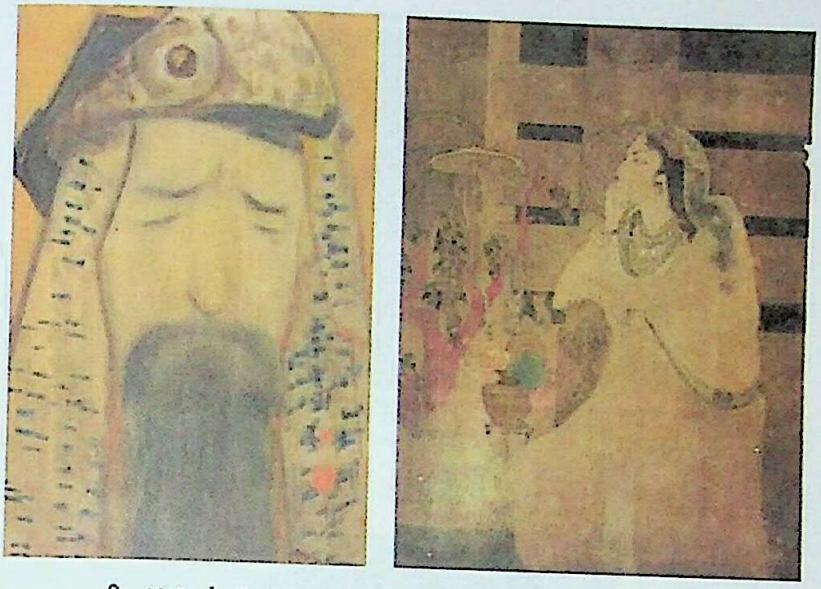

fig. 13.9a, b: Tartary art: Mongol-Khmers-Turkemenistan

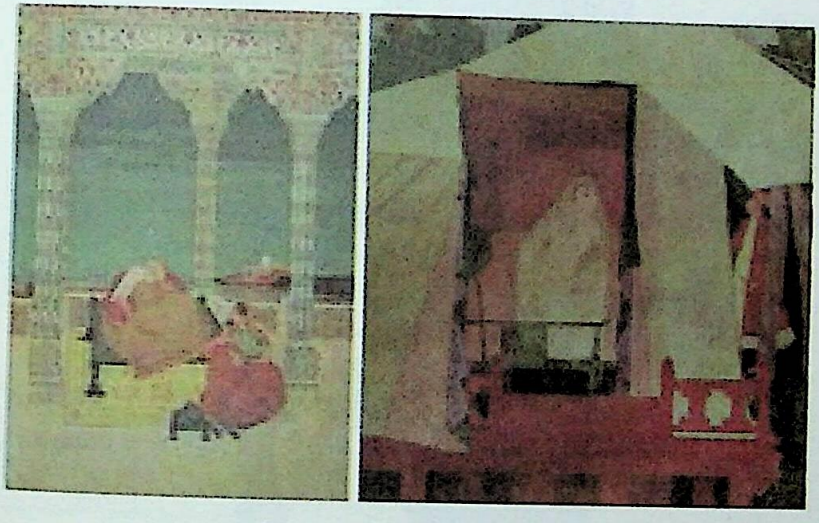

fig. 13.10a, b: Mughal themes

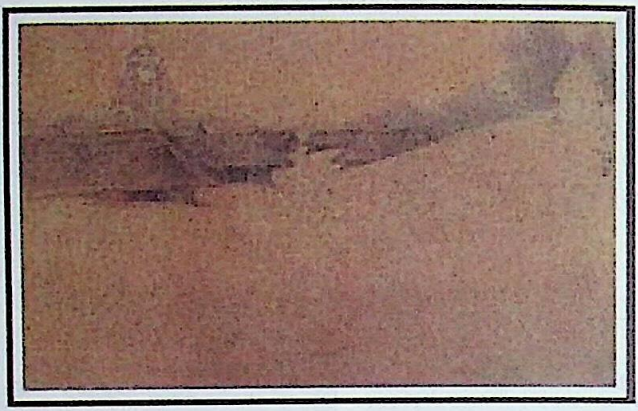

fig. 13.11: Jagannātha

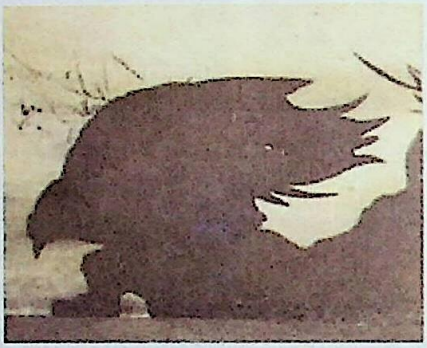

fig. 13.12: Abstraction

fig. 13.13: Abanindranath Tagore, the Fountainhead of modern Indian aesthetics

14

Multimodality, Translation and Transformation in Rāgamālā Paintings

An Exploration of Interrelationships through the Notion of Iconicity

Priyadarshi Patnaik

Understanding Rāgamālā: Three Art Forms and Their Relationship

The Rāgamālā painting tradition of north India is unique in that it draws deeply upon multimodality while not being essentially multimodal, i.e. if by multimodal we understand any work (of art) which uses more than one medium simultaneously. The Rāgamālā paintings are a series of miniature paintings — which were created by an artist or school of artists — that try to depict a set of *rāgas*[1] or musical compositions/melody through pictures in a specific sequence. Unless the viewer has an idea about the *rāgas*, their qualities, mood and the time of the day or year that the composition is expected to evoke, as well as the god/goddess or mythic figure with whom they are associated, it is not possible to fully appreciate the paintings.

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[1] Defining *rāga* for the Western audience is difficult. One may begin by saying what it is not: As Harold S. Powers puts it, "*a rāga is not a tune, nor is it a modal scale, but rather a continuum with scale and tune at its extremes*". Thus, a *rāga* is far more precise and much richer than a scale or mode, and much less fixed than a tune (Bor 1999: 2).

The Rāgamālā paintings followed a certain chronology. They were usually arranged according to two classificatory categories: one, familial and hierarchical, the other seasonal. Most Rāgamālā paintings followed a tradition of depicting 36 (or more) paintings in a sequence based on a combination of family and hierarchy. Each main (important) *rāga* figured first, followed by his (usually) five wives. Then the next main *rāga* figured. A common pattern of presentation was Rāga Bhairava and his consorts followed by Mālakauṅs (sometimes Kauśik),[2] Hindol, Dīpak, Śrī and Megha each followed by five consorts respectively (Bor 1999: 3; Wikipedia). The usual pattern of depiction was on the basis of gender, male (*rāga*) and female counterparts (*rāginī*) (and later male children (*rāgaputras*) and their consorts (*rāgaputrīs*) and had familial or gender connotations.[3]

The *rāgas* also had an organic link with time (Patnaik 2009). Each of these *rāgas* was also associated with a certain season,[4] namely Bhairava with summer, Mālkauṅs with autumn, Hindol with spring, Dīpak with rains, Śrī with autumn and Megha with winter. In terms of the time of the day the association was usually as follows (though some of the seasonal *rāgas* did not have any diurnal temporal connotations):[5]

- Bairava (early morning)

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[2] According to Damodara (*c.*1625). See Bor 1999.

[3] This is an aspect we will not highlight here.

[4] "Someśvara seems to be the first Sanskrit author who associates six of his *rāgas* with the Indian seasons: Śrī Rāga is to be performed in winter, Vasanta (as the name indicates) in spring, Bhairava in summer, Pañcama in fall, Megha in the rainy season and Naṭa-nārāyaṇa in the early winter. Indian music of the present time also uses among its hundreds of *rāgas*, the famous names of Someśvara's six seasonal *rāgas*. Although these and other *rāgas* have the same names we have reasons to assume that their modern scales and formulas do not always equal those of the past." — Kaufmann 1965: 276

[5] Based on various sources including Kaufmann 1965; Bor 1999, etc.

- *Mālkauṅs* (night)
- Hindol (late night or very early morning)
- Dīpak (no time indicated)
- Śrī (winter, late night)
- Megha (rainy season, mid-night)[6]

While there is debate about the order of presentation,[7] and the reason for the way they were arranged, two very important points get highlighted and these must be pointed out in order to develop the central idea of this paper. One, there is hardly a *rāga* which doesn't have any association with time, seasonal or diurnal. The performance of the *rāga* was expected to evoke the feeling of a specific time or season. The paintings, generally, had some reference to the time of the day or year.[8] Two, although the order of the seasons shows no clear articulation in the Rāgamālā paintings that have been collected and survive today, something which needs further systematic exploration, as Kaufmann points out, seasons were associated with *rāga*s pretty early (1965: 276) and the six central *rāga*s of the Rāgamālā paintings more or less corresponded to the six seasons enumerated in Indian tradition. So while one might point out that there is no clear evidence that the *rāga*s were presented according to the cycle, the *potential* for a cyclic presentation existed and exists today.[9] This argument is all

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[6] There are a lot of variations or even debates among sources, for some of these *rāga*s, time and season. But in most cases, there is agreement. What is, however, significant is the guiding principle of relationship being expounded in this tradition.

[7] See Kaufmann 1965, Bor 1999, Powers 1980 and Krishna 1961.

[8] The fact that the tradition also included many artists who deviated, or were illiterate as not to be able to read the text associated with the images clearly, led to certain variances or deviations. But in spite of that, the majority of paintings confirmed to the indication of specific times of days or years.

[9] There are many instances of contemporary performances or even recordings of the *rāgamālā*, the most popular being Ravi Shankar's →

the more strengthened by the term *rāga* (melody) *mālā* (garland) which embeds a cycle, an endless process, repetition, just like the movement of seasons and day and night, something which has relevance in talking about resemblances of the cosmic cycle to the garland of paintings, as well as to the resemblances of cyclic arrangement amongst forms like painting and music which will be discussed below.[10]

What logically follows is that the paintings are not expected to be appreciated in isolation. One is to view them in the sequence in which they have been presented. The *rāgamālā* (garland of musical compositions) has the potential of being sung *rāga* one after the other thus evoking the six seasons and the cycle of time:[11]

> Rāgamālā, literally meaning "garlands of *rāgas*", therefore, would, be paintings which would provide the viewer with a "mood of the particular season — which he would have attained had he listened to a particular *rāga*. — *Rāgamālā Painting*, 6

← *Rāgamālā* (Sitar Concert No. 2), 1982, which presents Lalit (before sunrise), Bairāgī (morning), Yaman (evening) and Miyāṅ kī Malhār (night) in sequence.

[10] While I had no access to the primary sources while writing the paper, it is puzzling that none of the papers and other documents that I came across emphasized on why this tradition was called a garland of melodies. This issue needs further exploration since in the Indian tradition each keyword or term is usually imputed with a number of iconic or symbolic significances.

[11] Whether the tradition of singing *rāgas* in succession existed in Indian tradition is not clear from my reading of the various texts. It is true that contemporary singers of great competence often thread associated *rāgas* together in a single composition skilfully or else sing short compositions in different *rāgas* (usually arranged according to time of the year or day) one after the other and this is designated *rāgamālā* today. *Rāgamālā*, thus, is well researched more as a visual art tradition than a tradition of musical performance. However, the potential exists, and the root and etymology of the word and musical practice needs further investigation.

Since each *rāga* has its appropriate time to be sung and (if) the threading of the *rāgas* is done accordingly, the *rāga* sequence keeps consonance with the time of the year. One the other hand, drawn out of the real temporal context, it is assumed to have the ability to recreate the seasons by evoking that part of the seasonal cycle in the listener's mind.

If we are to go by Indian tradition and assume that (1) a connoisseur is experiencing the paintings, and (2) the paintings are competent works of art, it is expected that the Rāgamālā paintings, by proxy, are expected to recreate in the viewer's mind the cadence of the melodies they represent, and next, to evoke the specific time of the year they embody. Thus, by the end of the viewing experience of the connoisseur, s/he is expected to have experienced the music of the Rāgamālā through the Rāgamālā series of paintings. But the story does not end there. While the attribute of sequentiality and the arrangement of the paintings in a specific sequence according to the time of the year are determined by the nature of the *rāgas* (melodic themes), the nature of the paintings themselves is linked to something else — the *dhyānaślokas*.[12]

Before we proceed, we take a pause and look at two such paintings, Hindol, *fig.* 14.1 (one of the primary *rāgas*) and Bhairavī *fig.* 14.2 (one of the consorts of Bhairava, another primary *rāga*). Note the iconography — Hindol or the swing being associated with the spring season, and Bhairavī associated with very early morning. At the top of the second painting is a text which is known as a *dhyānaśloka* and which is one of the sources of inspiration or rather iconic representation manifest in the painting.

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[12] Since Nārada, practically all known Sanskrit theorists mention besides the *rasas* specific performance times of the *rāgas*. Beginning with the *Rāga-Sāgara*, a work often ascribed to Nārada (even to Dattila, second century), we find in addition to lists of *rāgas* short *dhyānas*, *rāga* descriptions in poetic form which, centuries later, led to the pictorial representation of the *rāgas* (Kaufmann 1965: 276).

A *dhyānaśloka* (or a verse for meditation or contemplation) is usually a verse found in musical treatises which deal with *rāga*s as early as the second century CE (Kauffman 1965: 276). A *dhyāna* (meditation) *śloka* (verse) is a much wider tradition used in all kinds of spiritual and art practices, where one meditates on the descriptive verse in order to visualize a deity (Rao 1997: 226; Nakacami and Nagaswamy 2003: 84).[13] It virtually gives body to the *rāga* or *rāginī* (the female counterpart of a *rāga*) and creates the image of a god (or mythic figure) or goddess by giving a brief description of how s/he looks, what she wears or holds, the attributes of the various natural objects that surround her. A competent musician is expected to meditate on this pictorial representation to invoke the essence of a musical composition (*rāga*) or inversely, an intense meditation on a *rāga* may invoke these embodying images (Prajnanananda 1973: 31). For instance, the *dhyānaśloka* for Rāga Bhairava in *Rāga-Sāgara* reads:

> The sea of notes and microtones, with nectar of all varieties of rhythms and time-measures, the fulfilments of the desire of the worship of Śiva, with the body always besmeared with ashes, decked with matted locks, with the shine of the young moon on the head, with skulls as decorations, I adore Bhairava, the skilful dancer. — Kauffman 1965: 281

A *dhyānaśloka* is expected to evoke in the competent musician's mind the essence of the *rāga* he is contemplating. The Rāgamālā painting is an iconic recreation of the *dhyānaśloka* by the painter for the connoisseur. Thus, the experience of viewing the painting is expected to evoke the essence of the *rāga* in the mind of the listener, just as the *dhyānaśloka* is expected to evoke the *rāga* in the musician.

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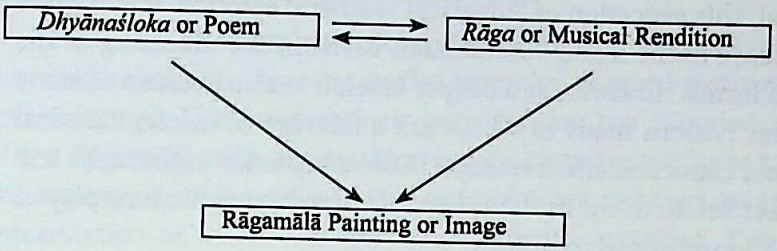
[13] Such a relation apparently seems arbitrary or conventional. However, there are two kinds of links. One, each *rāga* was associated with a deity (who through several of his/her attributes seemed compatible with that specific *rāga*). The other is that the specific mode in which the image of the deity and associated ambience was visualized by the musician depended on the *rāga*, its mood, etc. which were associated with certain seasons and emotions.

Diagramatically put, this is what the relationship looks like:



We have, in this instance, cited above three modes of aesthetic experience, which are linked to one another in complex ways. While in some cases the relationship is iconic, in other cases it is symbolic. In yet other cases, iconicity and symbolism are interrelated in more complex ways.

In the next section, we shall discuss iconicity of different kinds in this tradition of references. In the discussion to follow we shall briefly explore their implications for translation as well as their philosophical implications.

Painting, Music, Poetry:
Resemblances, Iconic and Conventional

Rāgamālā paintings incorporate iconicity from the *rāgas* and the *dhyānaślokas* in two different ways. While it is true that painting is a spatial art, it is also true that when one views paintings in a specific sequence, a temporal link of aesthetic appreciation and emotions takes place which in its interactivity (in that specific sequence) is distinctively different from appreciation of the paintings in isolation or in *random order*. The structure of the Rāgamālā paintings is iconic since this sequence resembles the sequence of the *rāgas* being sung, thus suggesting diagrammatic iconicity. At a simpler level, since the *dhyānaśloka* is evoked in the painting we have an iconic image as well. However, a more complex and interesting kind of iconic resemblance takes place within the mind of the perceiver. The connoisseur is expected to experience the same kind

of aesthetic emotions and evocation of time (diurnal or seasonal) from both the painting series as from the music series. At a surface level, this evocation of "identical aesthetic emotion" takes place because of the iconic resemblance between the unfolding of the two forms. However, at a deeper level, it is also because of many other reasons many of which are a mixture of iconic, indexical (since cause and effect relation in form is similar to the cause and effect relationship in the other form) and symbolic interplay of relationships and meanings.

From the point of view of the resemblance one finds between the *dhyānaślokas* and the Rāgamālā paintings, the iconicity involved is spatial. Although the *dhyanasloka* is read as a sequential unfolding of meaning, what is consolidated is an image which is a-temporal. In other words, the verse is descriptive and not narrative. It is a word picture which can be easily translated into an image — the colour of the body, what it wears or holds, the depiction of season or time of the day through objects such as flowers and trees, clouds and colour of the sky. However, the evocation of the meaning — the essence or cadence of the *rāga* — is "not" based on this resemblance. Then what is it based on? In a convoluted way it is the association of the actual *rāga* (as a musical composition) with the image in the mind of the listener that prepares him to understand the Rāgamālā painting in its essence. It is the embodiment of the *rāga* (as *dhyānaśloka*) and the *rāga* as a musical form which are assumed to be *combined* in the Rāgamālā painting. It is the combination of these two — one iconic image (verse into painting), the other conventional association of a particular meaning with a particular form (for example that Bhairava Rāga *figs.* 14.3-14.6 is always depicted as a dark-coloured image of Śiva with his consorts) — that together give a Rāgamālā painting its meaning in isolation.[14] However, it is only in the

[14] That is, if a person or even an artist with no knowledge of the *dhyānaśloka* looks at the relation between a *rāga* and its pictorial representation, it seems arbitrary to her. This is probably how images become symbolic when the connecting logic is lost in time.

iconic sequential unfolding that the whole meaning of aesthetic experience lies. In this sense, the sequential iconicity lies at the core of the experience of the Rāgamālā cycle.

From resembles form in the sequentiality of music and painting; meaning resembles meaning in the iconicity of word-pictures and paintings. This brief analysis suggests that the experience of the Rāgamālā cycle of paintings and its close resemblance to the experience of listening to the cycle of *rāgas*, is based on an intermixture of iconic and symbolic elements operating. Two, "perceived" iconicity or audience response lies at the core of this similarity (and at the highest level, identity) of the two aesthetic experiences. Two different modes of aesthetic performance can lead to similar/identical aesthetic emotional experience in the audience because of a fundamental iconicity that operates in the experience of the understanding of the different art forms. It is my submission that without the play of iconicity, merely by the use of arbitrary symbolic representation, such an experience is not possible. In other words, if a modern reader does not carry the experience of music and verse to the painting, the representation would look arbitrary and would fail to evoke the appropriate aesthetic experience.

Rasa theory, one of the most powerful theories in Indian aesthetics, focuses on the competence of a work of art in evoking sublime aesthetic experiences in the audience. It propounds the existence of nine core aesthetic emotions which can be evoked by any work. And this can be done by the interplay of cause and effect relationship. At a very simple level, let us say that sadness at separation from lover can be evoked as an aesthetic experience by looking at the depiction of what is sad. But how can this sadness be depicted? Definitely not directly, since if I say "I am sad" it will not evoke sadness in others. It has to be done indirectly, through suggestion by showing elements that indicate sadness. For instance, in a painting, this can be depicted by the body language, the drooping shapes of trees and bushes, the colours associated with

sadness, and so on. Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* (second century BCE – second century CE) deals elaborately with this theory which evolves, which later gets refined in the hands of Abhinavagupta. The point is that *rasa* experience forms a very important part of Indian music (Kaufmann 1965: 276) and it is believed that the culmination of the aesthetic experience in the audience is because of the sequential nature of perception in which the various emotions are suggested, experienced by the audience and intensified so as to lead to the culminating aesthetic experience of *rasa*. Thus, aesthetic experience comes through a sequence and the persistence of these experiences through stimulation leads to a certain kind of aesthetic relish.

This sequentiality lies at the core of the aesthetic experience. So, while, at a rational or logical level conventions or symbols or the arbitrary association of images with sounds may lead to a certain aesthetic experience, the final culminating aesthetic emotions created by the two art forms rely primarily on a specific sequentiality. If this sequence is changed, the two aesthetic experiences will become different. Thus, the iconic sequential relation cannot at any point be reduced to convention, or modified or made arbitrary since it will distort the nature of aesthetic relish. If the order of the paintings is changed, the aesthetic experience evoked by them will be different from that of the sequence of musical compositions.

Iconicity, Contiguity, Intermodal Translation and Audience Response

In the Indian arts a certain hierarchy prevails (*Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* 31-32). While it is common to see stories translated into dance, given the clothing of music or depicted as pictures, the reverse is never the case. But this is probably true of many other cultures as well. In our case study, music and poetry take from one another, thus music being put at par with poetry, while painting is always at the receiving end. The Rāgamālā paintings take from both music and verse. The verse is translated into an image. This

is probably a simple translation. Yet how much of it is iconic and how much conventional? Let us look into this. It is true, as Peirce points out, that no sign can be pure in terms of iconicity or conventionality. It is only a matter of what dominates. I believe, in all intermodal translations the element of the iconic comes to the fore. Interestingly, this is supported by tradition and culture. In other words, if one is not familiar with a certain tradition — say Indian tradition — the implications will be lost, thus indicating the possibility of the arbitrary or the conventional within that tradition (one thing being related symbolically to another). Yet, this is not always so. A complex set of resemblances may be in operation, which are lost to the outsider and even to us in time.

A translation (intermodal) has many possibilities. At one end, one may attempt to *construct* an exact correspondence. At the other end, one may attempt to *evoke* the exact emotion. In the Indian tradition, one of the most powerful theories dealing with aesthetics focuses on the aesthetic experience evoked by the work of art in the perceiver — *rasa*. This *rasa* or aesthetic emotion can pervade all art forms and more importantly different art forms may finally lead to the evocation of the same aesthetic emotions. As Walter Kaufmann points out, *rasa* is very closely linked to both music and the Rāgamālā paintings (Kaufmann 1965: 275-76). So the fundamental question that is raised is: is there the need for an exact correspondence for the evocation of identical (or similar) emotions? The answer is no. A certain degree of *improvisation* within the image as well as music system prevails. In spite of that a certain essence is expected to get communicated — the *rasa*. What is at play here, according to me, is an iconic *impression* — an impression of resemblances that comes into play among the art forms, as well as within the art forms. Yet what emerges is the same aesthetic emotional experience in the reader. Moreover, since it is a particular emotion which is the focus of a specific *rāga* — say erotic love — the various emotional attributes of aesthetic love that are expected to be played out in a pictorial or performative

format (as codified in *Nāṭyaśāstra*) along with associated visual elements like colour and behaviours (say red, specific gestures or postures associated with the *rasa* or aesthetic emotion) (*bibhāvas* or anticidents like the manifest sadness of the heroine and *anubhāvas* or consequents like the manifest responses to this by the hero, and the totality suggesting and then evoking an aesthetic emotional response in the audience) also get manifested in the painting. These have no direct relation to the musical composition, but on what the musical composition is expected to provoke in the perceiver in terms of visual evocation or action (visualizes such acts or actually feels like or does act them out). Thus, indexicality comes into play here and gets manifested in terms of resemblances of a more complex kind. Let me illustrate this with an example. Let us examine closely these three Rāgamālā paintings of Rāga Bhairava.

A trained art critic, by looking at the figures and the way they have been represented, the colours used and the environment suggested, can generally make out that this is Rāga Bhairava. Harold Powers presents this point clearly in his paper "Illustrated Inventories of Indian Ragamala Paintings", and takes support of Ebeling to make his point. He first quotes Ebeling:

> There is, however, a curious similarity between the forms of musical and painted *rāga* versions. The manner in which the iconography of a certain *rāga* or *rāginī* is treated in paintings, produced by different painters at different times in different workshops and/or localities provokes the analogy of the musical performance of a *rāga*. There it is required that a certain scale and certain rules and embellishments are implemented in an act of creative improvisation. Similarly, a Rāgamālā painting is composed of compulsory elements (the iconographic formula) and variable additions, subject to local style, wealth of the patron, skill of the painter and other influences. That makes the result in both music and painting a slightly different and thus unique issue of the theme, each time that it is performed or painted. (Ebeling, p. 16) — Ebeling quoted in Powers 1980: 475-76

And then emphasizes that:

> Ebeling's "curious similarity" is an abstract aesthetic-structural background property, a property which is as truly the essence of Indian classical music performance practice today as it is the essence of an iconographic system. The property turns on variation within the limits of recognizability, in any perceptual domain whatever; it is a matter of manipulating conventional motivic elements, be they musical, verbal, or pictorial, and of the concomitant and often equally conventionalized aggregation of such motivic elements into a larger perceptual structure. It is the heart of the matter. — Powers 1980: 476

Earlier, we discussed the element of iconic configuration. While a simple icon is of one to one correspondence and diagrammatic iconicity is that of resemblance of relation, here we have a resemblance of configuration which takes from both. Hence, we may have one to one correspondence with the *dhyāna* with Śiva smeared with ashes, while other elements like the companions, the time of the day, etc. are not supplied by the *dhyāna*, but by the association of the *rāga* with early morning. The elements of lotus, or devotion through gestures, etc. are suggested by the conventionalized presentation of *rasa* (indicated in *Nāṭyaśāstra*) rather than anything either in the music or in the poem. These elements may get reflected in various ways in say three different paintings. Yet, as in listening to a *raga* expounded differently by three different musicians, here also the connoisseur can identify the *rāga* pictured.

Second, one may notice in these paintings various elements like peacocks, lotus and so on which are not mentioned in the *dhyānaśloka*. Yet, because the dominant emotion is erotic love here, and since in the tradition of *Nāṭyaśāstra*, erotic love is associated with peacocks, flowers, etc. they figure in the paintings. So the verse is not directly "translated" in the painting. Recourse is taken to the whole *rasa* tradition and certain *contiguous* elements suggested there find their ways into the painting. And yet, in spite of these improvisations they are identified with Bhairava, and at the highest level of art and its perception, can lead to the experience of the

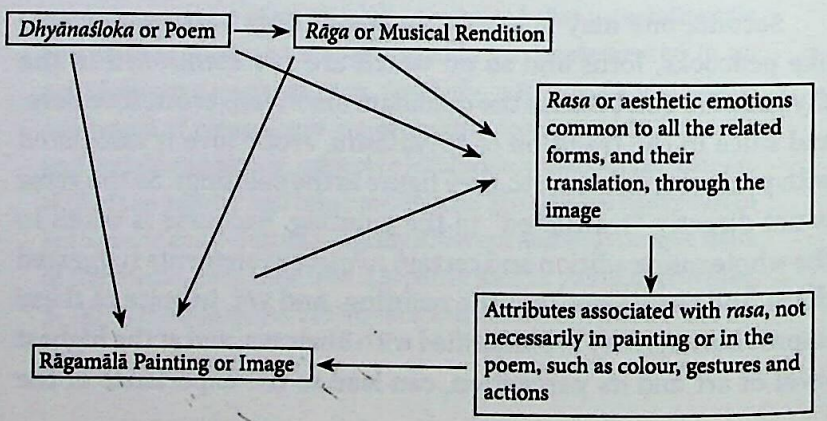
same *rasa*, that one experiences either through the *dhyāna* or the song. Each identity (say music, painting or poetry) is reconstituted by a set of codes which operate on similarity or resemblance of a certain kind that exists in all these art forms — and more important that which proves sameness through apparent difference.

	dhyana	
Thus each work	*raga*	can lead to the same *rasa*
	Miniature	

Because of echoes, configurations of resemblances, decoded within the culture, the same (or similar aesthetic experience) have its basis in the assumed organic, configurational, symbolic similarities amongst the art forms.

In terms of the translated elements of music that find their place in the paintings, one is already discussed earlier — sequential arrangement of images in the apt order. But another element — the *rasa* evoked by the music — is recreated in the painting. If the music evokes heroic emotions, then the painting attempts to depict heroism. This element may or may not be present in the poem (*dhyānaśloka*) and hence, its presence in the painting is based on the *rāga* (music) and the *rasa* it evokes.

This fairly complex relation among the art forms under discussion and *rasa* can be diagrammatically represented as follows. Here, the interplay between resemblance and convention is also very complex and needs close scrutiny.


Dhyānaśloka or Poem
Rāga or Musical Rendition
Rasa or aesthetic emotions common to all the related forms, and their translation, through the image
Attributes associated with *rasa*, not necessarily in painting or in the poem, such as colour, gestures and actions
Rāgamālā Painting or Image

In the above illustration the relations are as follows:

Dhyānaślokas (poem) — lead to iconic impression (emotive, *rasa*) in the image rather than reconstruction (equivalent to literal translation).

Rāga (musical composition) — representation in image (if one fails to perceive the relation of *dhyāna* to song and to painting) is conventional. As discussed at the beginning of this section, tradition plays an important role here.

Indirectly, because of the implicit pervasion of all the three art forms by a common *rasa* (aesthetic emotion) — the manifestation of the attributes of the *rasa* in the painting is iconic. But this is not diagrammatic iconicity since a configuration is not being exactly replicated. Rather I use the term "iconic impression" to represent this phenomenon.

Since time (seasons, time of the day) pervades this tradition, it is also relevant to discuss it here. In terms of the representation of time — it is *indexical* since time is invisible and only its effects are manifest as seasonal flowers, colours of day or night, etc. Change or movement as manifestation of time is indicated through indexical relation. But in terms of relation among the modes, it is iconic since, time suggested by the music is pictorially made manifest. Meaning echoes meaning.[15]

Another interesting relation of evocation or audience response must also be discussed here:

Music — evokes — day/time — evokes audience response — manifested in art
Seasons — helps understand art
Colours

[15] I understand that Winfried Nöth's concepts of form miming form relates to the same medium (endophoric) while I am here talking of two mediums, and thus this certain of iconicity may be considered diagrammatic and/or exophoric.

A common aesthetic experience based on culture/tradition (mixture of iconic, indexical and conventional) both manifested in and evoked by the three arts is at play here. The entire aesthetic experience of Rāgamālā paintings (and of Rāgamālā tradition in general) is based on the ability of the perceiver to *perceive resemblances*, in order to create the aesthetic experience.

In Indian tradition there is belief in the natural connection between the inner and the outer. Nothing is arbitrary not even the symbol — it always has an iconic or indexical root. Probably much of literary tradition in all cultures has a similar origin. It is only lucky for us here, that to a certain extent, these links of resemblances and similarities can be traced back in the Rāgamālā tradition. This strengthens our belief that, especially in art forms, that which is conventionalized almost always has its root in the quest for similarity or sameness. The other important point is that the ideology or belief system within a tradition pervades its art forms — as in this case the desire to achieve the *same aesthetic experience through different modes* — thus goading its proponents to search for various modes of translations in order to recreate the same experience. Thus, the final touch stone is the aesthetic experience for an apt translation.

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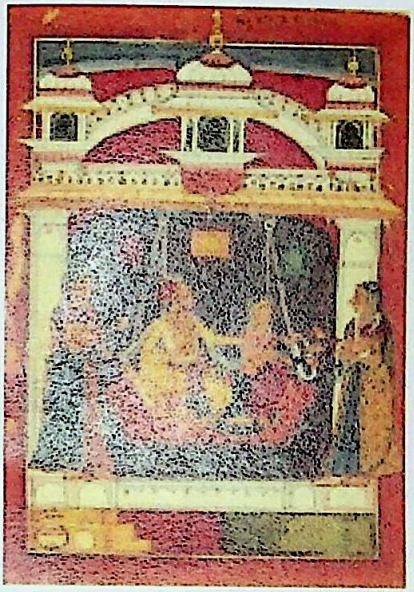

fig. 14.1: Rāga Hindola

fig. 14.2: Rāginī Bhairavī

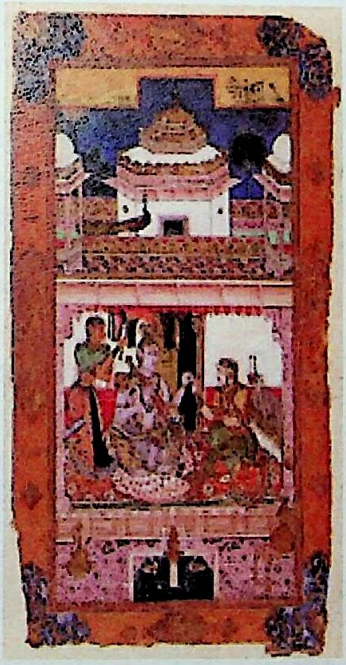

fig. 14.3: Rāga Bhairava

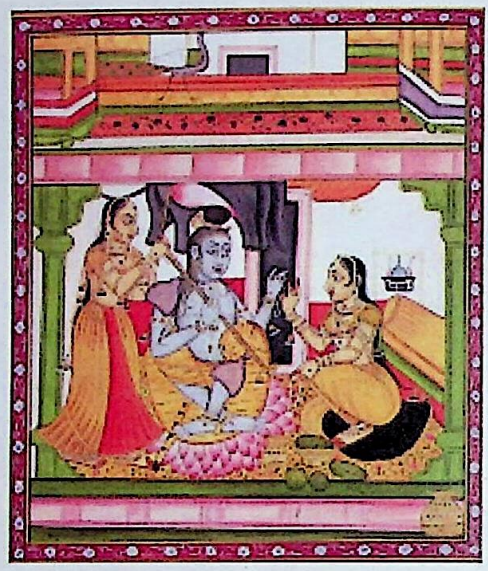

fig. 14.4: Rāga Bhairava (Source: Exotic India)

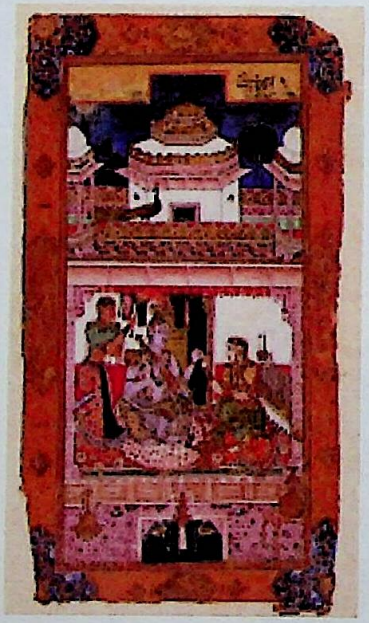

fig. 14.5: Rāga Bhairava
(Source: Wikipedia)

fig. 14.6: Rāga Bhairava
(Source: Kala Bhavan Ragamala collection)

15

From Imitation to Ingenuity
Bengali Theatre from 1795–1857

Ujjwal Jana

In tracing the genesis and evolution of Bengali theatre, one unmistakably notices the influence of the European theatres of one sort or another, the Bengali drama had been subjected to in its early stages of development. In fact, the first English theatre of Bengal, in particular Calcutta, was established in 1756 at Lalbazar (Guha-Thakurta 2001: 40). Bengal was at crossroads at this crucial period. Having won the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the East India Company which entered India as a trading company gradually became the colonial ruler and made Kolkata the capital of trade and commerce. With this began the spread of English education, the sole objective of which was to impart English education to the native folks and engage them for administrative convenience. As a result of this, changes in the social, economic and cultural spheres were inevitable. Within a few years after Warren Hastings took charge of Governor-Generalship, another theatre, Calcutta Theatre or the New Playhouse, came into existence under his active patronage in 1775 which continued for more than hundred years and "entertained a largely British audience of officers, merchants, clerks and 'adventurers' associated with the East India Company and later with the civil service" (Singh 1996: 102). This theatre and the other theatres which were established in the later years had an insulated life of their own either having little or almost no touch with the native cultural tradition and life. "Modern theatre

in Bengal began by initiating both the form and the style of the European stage, as imitation," argues Meghna Guha Thakurta, " for this reason it did not easily become part of mainstream Bengali Culture" (1997: 240). The plays being staged by these playhouses were exclusivist in nature and limited in scope.

What seems most paradoxical is that this elite class of Bengali society developed an indifferent attitude towards the indigenous culture and folk performances of Bengal and being empowered with English education and exposed to the English fashions and cultures, played a pivotal role in promoting English theatres in Calcutta. In fact, there is much evidence to justify that the Bengali theatre owes much to the existing English theatres in its formative and evolutionary stages. Started in an imitative way, Bengali theatre took a considerable period of time to come out of the clutches of foreign (*videśī*) influence and to construct its own native identity and build a native or *deśī* theatre its own. To make a concise but critical survey of this transformation from a stage of imitation to one of independence is the objective of this paper.

The earliest ever attempt of staging a play in Bengali was made in Calcutta in 1795 by no other than a Russian linguist and adventurer Herasim Lebedeff. Lebedeff came to Calcutta in 1785 having spent two years in Madras and stayed here for the next ten years till he finally left India forever in 1797. On his return to Calcutta, Lebedeff devoted his time to learning Bengali language under the tutelage of Golok Nath Das and translated two English plays of Paul Jodrell — *The Disguise* and *Love Is the Best Doctor* — into Bengali and decided to stage these two plays subsequently. With this objective in mind, Lebedeff had obtained consent from the then Governor-General to build a playhouse "decorated in the Bengali style" with the artists from both the sexes and musical notes from the eminent poet Bharat Chandra Ray (Banerjee 1943: 4). The first play was scheduled to be performed on 27 November 1795 and an advertisement in this regard was published in the *Calcutta Gazette* on 20 November 1795. The second play was scheduled to be staged

on 21 March 1796. On successful performance of both these plays, Lebedeff expressed his indebtedness to the people in general by saying:

> Mr. Lebedeff, respectfully acknowledges the very distinguished Patronage, the Ladies and Gentlemen of this Settlement . . . and begs leave to assure them, he has the most grateful sense of the very liberal support afforded him on this occasion, and intreats they will be pleased to accept his warmest Thanks.

This was published in an advertisement in the *Calcutta Gazette* on 24 March 1796 (Banerjee 1943: 4).

After Lebedeff's pioneering efforts to produce plays in vernacular "There was no one to carry on the good work which he had started" (Raha 1978: 18). It is important to remember that the Himalayan task that Lebedeff had entrusted with himself (being a foreigner) by translating and staging the plays in Bengali and the way he accomplished his task in spite of odds, put us into shame, so to speak. Some of the most important experimentations and innovations, he inducted for making them more entertaining and emotionally appealing to the Bengali psyche, bear testimony to his love for this language and its people. The engagement of the Bengali actors and actresses, the decoration of the stage in Bengali fashion, and above all accommodating Bharat Chandra Ray's poetical pieces for producing musical effects paved the way for the promising future of Bengali theatre and indicated the immense potential it held for posterity.

The subsequent years went futile for Bengali theatre as the climate for production of any play in Bengali was not congenial. First of all, there was the dearth of creative pieces in Bengali literature and no courageous soul like Lebedeff emerged to take hold of this endeavour. What was most disappointing was that the elite class of Bengali society who had English education and adopted the Western manners and outlook helped in promoting the English theatres and got a tremendous dislike for what is related to

our own culture and identity. They were the blind imitators of the occidental culture and fashions. This bareness in Bengali theatre continued "for about three decades until Nabin Basu's Shyambazar Theatre" (Chatterjee 1995: 19). From the end of the eighteenth century onwards, Bengali society had undergone severe changes in social, economic and cultural life with the onslaught of the empire-expansion project of the colonial rulers. The homogeneous culture of the Bengalees was ruptured by the imposition of the different value and culture system of the Europeans. In fact, Bengal was at the door of "Renaissance", to quote Chatterjee (ibid.: 20). The real crisis in identity and a kind of cultural amnesia gripped the mind of the people of Bengal who belonged to either the "Bābūs" or the "middle class" category. Sandwiched between alien and native cultures, these people tried to strike a balance and with a stable political and economic condition and peaceful social set-up in the 1920s and 1930s, "a system of patronage was born that was to keep Bengali theatre alive for some time" (ibid.).

What stands conspicuous here is that the cultural deflection and perplexing interface of heterogeneous cultures as created by the colonial encounter lasted long, but some enlightened, aristocratic and affluent Bengali people took the task of establishing theatres of their own on European model to promote and patronize Bengali theatre. As Chatterjee has rightly pointed out, the voice of the contemporary newspapers claimed "the need for native theatres very early in the first quarter of the nineteenth Century" (ibid.). This enterprise, no doubt, provided a source of sustenance to Bengali theatre and indicated the affirmative move and the nativistic turn Bengali drama was to take later on. In the year 1831, "the first genuine Bengali theatre" (Guha-Thakurta 1997: 46) was set up by Prasanna Kumar Tagore in the name of Hindoo Theatre which went on to perform in its opening night selected parts of *Julius Caeser* and the English translation of Bhavabhūti's *Uttararāmacarita.* Prasanna Kumar Tagore's Hindu Theatre did not survive long primarily because of the fact that most of the plays

being performed in English were not accessible to all. Moreover, the serious subject matter could not reach out to everybody.

The Bengali drama, it has to be recognized, which started by taking the European theatres as its model at the beginning, gradually developed its own rhythm and form and assumed an ingenious identity. But this transformation was a complex process which Bengali drama surmounted with the vitality of its own. The noble efforts of the Bengali intelligentsia for constructing more and more native theatres were stirred "by the success of English plays and playhouses . . ." (ibid.).

A landmark event in the theatre history of Bengal was occasioned by the establishment of a Bengali playhouse under the patronage of Nabinchandra Basu at his Shyambazar residence in 1835 only for the performance of plays in Bengali language. This playhouse was the first of its kind as managed by Bengali people for staging only Bengali plays to give space to native tradition, culture and life. This was certainly a step forward towards achieving independence and forging a new stature and identity of its own. The first Bengali play that was performed by Bengali actors and actresses on Bengali stage was *Bidyasundar*, based on a popular story of the contemporary time (ibid.: 47). What is remarkable about this performance is that Basu inducted traditional Bengali culture and life into this play to add a new dimension to the *swedeshi* spirit and to make it home-spun. In his *Bengali Stage*, Brajendranath Bandopadhyay reproduced information about the performance of *Bidyasundar*, from *Hindu Pioneer Magazine* (22 October 1835):

> This private theatre, got up about two years ago, is still supported by Babu Nobinchandra Bose . . . where four or five plays are acted during the year. These are native performances, by people entirely Hindus, after the English fashion, in the vernacular language of their country . . . — Banerjee 1943: 10

The spurt of forming private theatrical houses started in the 1850s by the Bengali elites. In 1857, almost two playhouses were

established — one was Ashutosh Deb's private playhouse at his Simulia residence which performed Kālidāsa's *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* translated into Bengali by Nanda Kumar Ray on 30 January 1857 and the other was the temporary stage at Ranajoy Basak's house in Nutanbazar which witnessed the performance of the first play in vernacular *Kulinkulasavayasa* by Ramnarayan Tarkaratna. Even after this, the imitative spirit of the Bengali play still lingered, but out of this started the assimilating process gradually. The two important private theatres that came up in subsequent time survived quite a considerable period of time. One was the Hindu Theatre (1831) as established by the famous Tagores of Jorasanko and the other was the Belgachia Natyasala established and patronized by the *rājās* of Paikpara. What was special about the Tagores was that they made arrangements for offering prizes to those who would be writing plays in Bengali (Raha 1978: 19). This was a very laudable professional step taken by the Tagores to promote the growth and development of Bengali literature, thereby giving oxygen to the sun-burnt sapling. On the other hand, the Belgachia Natyasala had for its maiden performance *Ratnabali,* "a Bengali adaptation by Ramnarayan Tarkaratna of the Sanskrit original" (ibid.: 20) and later on it staged the original Bengali play *Sarmistha* written by Madhusudan Dutt in 1859.

In conclusion, it can be said that Bengali drama would have attained its autonomy in style and identity much before it got, had there been a national consciousness and less of imitative propensity among the Bengalis in the post-Lebedeff era. However, it took almost sixty years to be evolved out of the trappings of English theatre and to occupy a distinct place for itself.

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